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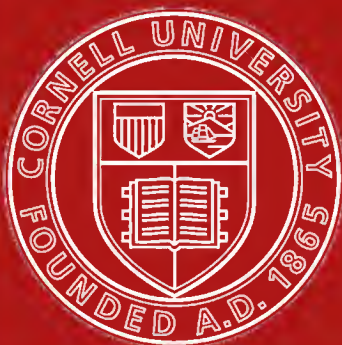
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NAPOLEON III AND THE WOMEN HE LOVED



LOUIS NAPOLEON BONAPARTE IN 1849

NAPOLEON III AND THE WOMEN HE LOVED

BY

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TRANSLATED BY

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and Facsimile Letters*

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NAPOLEON III AND THE WOMEN HE LOVED

BOOK THE FIRST

THE LOVE-AFFAIRS OF THE CONSPIRATOR

I

PRINCE LOUIS-NAPOLEON BONAPARTE CONSIDERED AS A LOVER

The physical appearance of the Prince—His description—His eyes are curious—What women think of his beauty—His youth and sentimental education—The romantic castle of Arenenberg—*Le doux ténébreux*—He is romanesque and theatrical—He does not love poetry—A troubadour—His marriage projects—He refuses to become the husband of the Queen of Portugal—Mme. S. and the Prince's remembrance of her—His love affair with Princesse Mathilde—Rumours of his marriage with the daughter of the Tsar—The Miss of Camden Place—The fiancée millionaire—The chapter of the Princesses—How his marriage projects fall through—A word of King Jerome—The marriage of the Emperor.

BEFORE paying attention to his moral worth it is naturally the physical appearance of the lover which

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first strikes a woman. Now was Louis Napoleon, the son of King Louis and Queen Hortense, that sort of handsome lover of whom fair ladies are dreaming, ladies who see in every man a hidden troubadour? What qualities did he possess, besides his title of prince and nephew of Napoleon, calculated to seduce and conquer them, to kindle in their feeble souls the fire of romantic passions? How was he? One must admit that, generally speaking, the women of his time judged him rather advantageously. "The Emperor is of rather short stature, but full of dignity," says the Comtesse Stéphanie de Tascher de la Pagerie. Police documents minutely describe his stature. In 1840 he was thirty-two years of age, and when he appeared before the Court of Paris—in consequence of the conspiracy of Boulogne—he was described as measuring 1 metre 68. Curiously enough, however, whilst we imagine him growing taller with age, he appears, on the contrary, to have grown smaller. In 1846, when he escaped from the prison of Ham, he only measured 1 metre 66, and such is also the indication contained in a police report of 1848. His short

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stature the Emperor made up by an easy, discreet and reserved deportment. His stoutness and shortness almost disappeared when he mounted on horseback. De Moltke, who saw him thus for the first time, wrote to his wife: He looks well on horseback, but not so well on foot. Love, however, is not made on horseback—and—one woman therefore remarked that the prince was too small for his striking head. His head *was* striking. Official documents say that he had chatain hair and eyebrows, grey eyes, a small mouth, thick lips, a pointed chin, an oval face, broad shoulders, and that he stooped a little. Such was the Prince Louis Napoleon from 1840 to 1848. As Emperor he had changed but little.

His blonde moustache had become longer, the pale colour of his face had turned a little yellow—but his eye had remained unchanged. Contemporaries were struck by the eyes of Napoleon III. “They were eyes of enamel, without fire nor intelligence,” says a political writer of 1848. Indeed—Napoleon’s eyes were those of his mother Hortense. They were small, of a bluish grey, and generally without expression—

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dreamy, and as if lost in space. They fixed one as if through a glass, and seemed to have been covered with a veil of dreaminess and languor. Yet those eyes could become marvellously animated when the Emperor was amused; then they became caressing and lively. His look pleased the women.

“I have heard,” writes General Ricard, “that many women were thrilled by this look; for whatever is mysterious and unintelligible always attracts women.” One of them said: “The Emperor’s look seems to be lost in the unknown,” and another added: “His blue eyes, almost colourless, appear to me full of an inexpressible charm.” Ordinarily veiled, as if looking within, they could often become very expressive, full of benevolence and goodness. Such eyes must have been very eloquent in romance and love-affairs. Masculine descriptions, however, are not very favourable to the Prince. “His appearance is rather disagreeable,” says a pamphlet; and even a friend, Dr. Evans, declares that the Prince was not handsome in the strict sense of the word, whilst a

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Parisian, who met him in 1854, exclaimed: "What a monster!" Another eye-witness, somewhat indifferent and unsympathetic, says, that without being absolutely ugly the Emperor was neither a fine nor an imposing man! Some people maintained that Louis Napoleon resembled his uncle, the great Napoleon; but when he appeared for the first time in the Palais Bourbon, it was declared that he bore no resemblance whatever with the Emperor!

Napoleon I., however, never tried to have such an appearance as to please women. It was different with Louis Napoleon. His hair and moustache—in a word his whole get-up was that of a man of pretensions! As a rule, therefore, women liked him, though not all of them. "Neither his figure nor his appearance are distinguished," said the Baronne du Montet in 1837, at Baden-Baden. And one contemporary says: "His physical appearance must have stood in the way of his passions"—but to this a woman replied: "He can and will please whenever he likes." Another woman, in love with Louis Napoleon, admitted that he produced upon her the effect of a

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woman! It is evident that she spoke from a moral point of view. And yet—was she right? For there was nothing feminine nor effeminate in the individuality of Napoleon. Philalrète Chasles has marvelously summed up the Emperor's general appearance when he said that he was calm, polite like an Englishman, cold and subtle, qualities of a Beauharnais rather than a Bonaparte, a Beauharnais who had sojourned in England. He was "*sans cœur*," adds Chasles, and without attachment for men. But what about women?

In order to understand him well, we must go back to his solitary youth, passed between the mountains of Switzerland, whither, after the fall of Napoleon, Hortense had retired. In the small castle of Arenenberg, in the midst of remembrances and the ruins of a past epoch, the exiled Queen of Holland had constituted a small, tranquil and simple Court, at which her beloved son grew up. Sentimental and romantic, the mother inculcated in the son the religion of sentiment, the cult of the Romanesque! Tender romances beguiled the days of her long and tedious

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exile. Then there were the surrounding landscapes, the aspect of dark forests, of mountain crests and glaciers, the vague blue of the Swiss lakes. It is a healthy and vigorous country which pleased her melancholy soul. The castle of Arenenberg is situated on the territory of Manenbach, in the commune of Sallenstein, in the canton of Thurgovia, on the mountain slope dominating the lake of Constance. Hortense had acquired the castle in 1817 from the family Streng for 44,000 francs. Her son kept the property six years after her death, but, pressed for money, especially during the conspiracy of Boulogne, he sold the maternal inheritance. Later on, when he became Emperor, he bought it back in 1855, and appointed the Marquis Giacomo Visconti as the guardian of the castle. Arenenberg has since passed into the hands of the widow of Napoleon III., who sent the furniture either to her residence of Farnborough Hill or to the Museum of Malmaison, and made a present of the castle to the Canton of Thurgovia. The community established there a school for arts and crafts, and there, between the walls where

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now young intelligences learn the secrets of industry, the soul of Napoleon III. was formed.

It was a melancholy domain where he passed the days of his childhood, in front of those admirable snowy mountain peaks, in the midst of winter storms, in that blue and green landscape where the towers of Constance point their stony fingers to heaven. Here, in this frozen and immobile nature, he learned to look into himself. His mother called him "le doux ténébreux." It was here that he acquired that love of dreaming which even the cares of Empire did not make him discontinue, and where he grew accustomed to that vague phraseology which he never abandoned. In the islet of the poplars, under the weeping willow, he inscribed his name upon the tomb of Jean Jacques Rousseau, and the mysteries of carbonarism attracted him mightily. His soul, that "soul of adventure," was nourished in the repeated conspiracies planned in secret garrets. The theatrical always tempted and attracted him. What wonderful *mise-en-scène* in the conspiracy of Strasburg, and what military fairy-show in that of Boulogne. Is he not a

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child of that Empire which for twenty years, in its love of the theatrical had forgotten the ideal of Jacobine liberalism? “He will always remain a mummer,” said Madame Hamelin in 1839. It is not mummery with him, but a simple manifestation of his incurably romantic soul. His eyes kept the reflection of his vagueness and his traits expressed a “German romanesqueness.” But though a dreamer he was not averse to action—and it is quite wrong to imagine him as a poet, as does an English author. Louis Napoleon had indeed only little taste for art and poetry. “A poem sends him to sleep and a picture makes him yawn. Under the Empire, at Compiègne, during the summer, he often used to get hold of a novel which one of the Empress’s ladies-in-waiting had been reading aloud and continued to read it. Nearly always, however, he ridiculised the poetic passages, laughed at the situations in which the author placed his heroes, and made light of the sentiments of love to which they gave expression. This is a typical trait which made Dr. Evans rightly conclude that Louis Napoleon loved facts and not imagination. He was a phil-

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osopher, not a poet. Had he been a poet he would have continued to dream under the trees of the castle of Arenenberg, but being romanesque he tried adventure. He wanted to be hero at Strasburg and Boulogne; he conquered a throne and died as an exile in a sad and gloomy English castle. This is a trait of his character. One day, he was eleven years of age then, he was walking on the banks of the Rhine at Mannheim, in company of his cousins, the Princesses of Baden. Full of the fire of animation, he was explaining to them that the chivalrous character of the French had not yet degenerated, and to prove his words he threw himself into the Rhine to bring back a flower which the wind had carried away from the head of one of the young ladies. This is a feat worthy of a mediaeval troubadour, the *genre* in which Queen Hortense and her aquarelles and romances so well excelled. He had remained a troubadour a long time and had all the timidity of the latter. Before the Empire he was rather timid with women, and when speaking of him they used to say, like the dancer Taglioni, that he was a very agreeable man. Once, at a dance given by

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Queen Hortense, Donna Luisa Cortini, Princess of Casigliano, asked him why he did not dance—to which he replied that a Bonaparte should not dance. Though romanesque, however, he is not ridiculous. He speaks with intelligence and sagely when he writes to the daughter of a former prefect of the Empire : “ Women do not like the whining men; I am not such by nature.” Was he so by accident? Possibly, but no trace of this possibility is to be found anywhere. Merimée, it is true, writes somewhere that Louis Napoleon was never gay—but the author of a pamphlet maintains that, on the contrary, he was easily amused. His amusements, however, were not without a certain gravity. In 1847, in an hotel at Greenwich where he dined with a few friends, he looked down from the balcony after the meal and amused himself in throwing grains of raisins upon the bald head of a gentleman who was conversing with several fair ladies. The most amusing part of this story is the impossible air of the Prince whilst enjoying the practical joke. In love, too, he could be easily amused. “ The Emperor was not a *raffiné* in love-affairs. And it is

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perhaps to this indifference in the research of violent sensations to which one must attribute his apparent inconstancy with regard to women—and the little importance which they acquired in the serious acts of his life.” Indeed, all he asked of women was to amuse him. “I do not like stupid women,” he said. This opinion, however, as we shall see in the course of this book, he expressed only later in life, for in his youth, like his mother, who was lively and ardent, he loved pleasure. At that time women could make him humble; he fell a prey to their seductions and accepted their passing and perishable manifestations of love. “I tell you,” wrote Merimée to Mme. de la Rochejaquelin, “that I have never met a more naïve man.” Apparently he was so purposely, for later on this *genre* troubadour changed into a polite and smiling indifference. His cousin, Princesse Mathilde, could never find a solution to this after all easy problem of his contemptuous and dreamy indifference. “This man,” she said to the brothers Goncourt, “is neither lively nor impressionable! Nothing can move him. Had I married him, I think that I might have broken his head



QUEEN HORTENSE, MOTHER OF LOUIS NAPOLEON

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just to see what was in it.” “ Had I married him ! ” for she had been on the point of marrying him. This is another corner in the study of Napoleon’s attitude towards women to which we must pay some attention.

In one of the romances which the Queen Hortense used to set to music, the following lines occur:—

Mon fils, au matin de tes jours
Si, d’une belle
Le cœur fidèle
Répond à tes chastes amours.

Que bientôt l’hymen sanctifie
Des noeuds si chers
Et tout à ta première amie
Autre ne sers !

Charming and wise advice ! In real life, however, Queen Hortense summed it up in a more practical manner. “ My only wish,” she wrote to her son in 1833, “ is to keep you always by my side. I hope to see you married to a good little woman, young, well-behaved and educated, whom you will shape and mould in accordance with your character and

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who will take care of your little children. This is the only happiness which one ought to wish for in this world.” An exquisite and delicious bourgeois—ideal!

This good and little woman Louis Napoleon thought that he found her in the person of Mlle. de Padua, the daughter of the Duc de Padua. He was decided to marry her, “although,” he wrote to the father in June 1834, “I am in no hurry to get married.” He was twenty-six at that moment, and his hesitation is comprehensible. A few days afterwards, on July 13, he wrote again: “I shall soon get married.” This *soon*, however, was said too early, for two months afterwards Louis Napoleon gave up this marriage-plan. “You console me,” wrote his mother, “by telling me that you are not in love.” Love is essential, if one wishes to choose well and to avoid the misfortunes all too frequent in wedded life. On September the 18th the Prince wrote to his father, then at Florence, as follows: “I had hoped that in your last letter you would have given your full approbation to my project of marriage—but you simply give your

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formal consent—and do not seem to approve of the projected union. As, on the other hand, I am not at all in love with Mlle. de Padua, and as the Duke will give her only a meagre *dot*, I give up the idea of marrying now. I hope to be able to find someone who will possess all the advantages, and especially that of suiting you perfectly.

Mlle. de Padua consoled herself very quickly. She married Edward James Thayer, municipal councillor in 1848, and whom the Emperor Napoleon III. appointed senator and general director of the post-office. It was in this manner that Mlle. de Padua's fiancé of 1834 excused himself. Next year there was another rumour of an engagement. Louis Napoleon was supposed to marry the daughter of Don Pedro, Emperor of Brezil, Jeanne Charlotte Léopoldine Isidora da Cruz Françoise Xavier da Paula Michaela Gabriella Rafaëla Louise Gonzague, born in 1819 at Rio de Janeiro. One of the Prince's friends in Switzerland, Paul Emile Maurice, advised him to refuse the offer, as he had "a more brilliant future in store." "I do not wish to run about Europe selling my person

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to the highest bidder,” wrote the Prince to his mother. I have no intention whatever to marry an unknown lady in order to gain a throne in the midst of a nation to whom I am an utter stranger—and for the acquisition of which I shall have done nothing!” This would-be fiancée was indeed placed on the throne of Portugal as Dona Maria II. On January 25, 1835, she married Prince Augustus of Leuchtenberg, to whom a prince of Saxe Coburg Gotha succeeded. Dona Maria died in 1853.

But why should the Prince have gone so far to look for what he could find in his own neighbourhood. At this moment public rumour would have him marry Mlle. Louise Chapelain de Séréville, “a tall and magnificent young lady of 18 or 20, exceedingly intelligent. She was his neighbour at the Château de Louiseberg, where she lived as the adopted daughter of the Marquis de Crenay, former royalist officer, who had lost one arm at Quiberon. This project of marriage was not realised, and in 1847 Mlle. de Séréville became Comtesse de Sparre. She died in 1897 in her Château de la Brunette, in Vaucluse. She must have

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often thought of the days when she might have become Empress of the French. At that time Louis Napoleon seems to have fallen in love with a young widow, whom he wished to marry. I quote a passage from a journal : “ While occupying the not very remunerative position of captain of artillery in Switzerland, the Prince fell in love with a young and rich widow, Mme. S. His offer of marriage was refused, though in very polite and even flattering terms, so as not to offend the Prince, who never forgot the family of her whom he had wished to make his wife.” This marriage project seems really to have existed, as the following passage testifies :

“ This lady, whom I had the honour of knowing, and who was very respectable, was Mme. Saunier. She told me herself the story—and as a fond mother she afterwards availed herself of the incident in order to obtain the advancement of her son under the Empire.”

This is another proof of the good nature of the Emperor Napoleon III. All these marriage plans preceded that of his proposed union with Princesse

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Mathilde. Born at Triest on May 27, 1820, during the exile of her father, Mathilde Laetitia Wilhelmina was the daughter of King Jérôme, the youngest brother of Napoleon I. The plan of an engagement of Louis Napoleon to one of his cousins, a daughter of Prince Eugène, had failed, on account of the delicate health of the Princesse, and "it was then that the Prince, having met Mathilde, declared to his mother that he would be very happy to marry her." "He was very fond of her," wrote Emile Ollivier. Louis Napoleon, so it seemed at least, was now going to be happy. Everything was ready for their projected union. One day, however, having accompanied Mathilde across the park of Arenenberg, he noticed a tree that had been struck by lightning, and the idea arose in his mind that his marriage would be broken off by the hand of destiny. And so it happened, the Prince himself having to a great extent played the part of destiny. In consequence of the Coup d'Etat of Strasburg all relations between the fiancé and his future father-in-law were broken off. Jérôme swore



THE PRINCESS MATHILDE

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that he would never give his daughter to a rebel. He kept his word, and on November 12, 1840, Mathilde married Anatole Nicolaevich Demidov, Prince of San Donato. What this union was is well known. It lasted five years. It was in the prison of Ham, where he was being detained in consequence of the Coup d'Etat of Boulogne, where Louis Napoleon received the news of the marriage. He wept bitterly and declared that this was the last and heaviest blow he had received. But there is no human sorrow, and especially wounded love, which does not find some consolation. Louis Napoleon consoled himself. One day, under the Empire, at a dinner at the Tuileries, Napoleon III. placed between Mme. X., his mistress, and Mathilde, his former fiancée, said quite sadly to the latter : " Mathilde, if you would have wished it, you would have been here now."

" If she would have wished it!" She was not the only one not to have wished it. Thus immediately after the engagement with Mathilde had been broken off, in 1837, Louis Napoleon was a frequent visitor at the house of the Princesse de Béthune at Baden-

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Baden. They addressed him as Monseigneur, and the Princesse had a daughter who would no doubt have married him. Thus from year to year the rumours of his engagements continued and were constantly repeated. In 1838 he was supposed to have been engaged to the Grand Duchess Olga, second daughter of Tsar Nicholas I. In 1839 another opportunity offered itself. He was in England then and was a frequent visitor at Camden Place, a superb and melancholy property in the County of Kent. The property had passed into the hands of a rich City merchant named Bonar, who was assassinated there with his wife on the night of May 30, 1812. A certain Mr. Rowles, of States Street, London, came to live there. Mr. Rowles had a daughter Emily, to whom the Prince was not indifferent. The father, however, having heard of the liaisons of the Prince, the negotiations were broken off. Miss Emily married afterwards the Marquis Campana, to whom His Majesty Napoleon III. afterwards granted his august protection. The would-be fiancées of Louis Napoleon had all a good memory. But he himself, did he remember the affair,

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when thirty years later, as the vanquished of Sedan, and having lost his throne, he came to seek refuge in this very Camden Place, on the threshold of which death received him? This fiancée, apart from his British mistresses—was not the only Englishwoman who figured in the Prince's matrimonial projects. We find among them a Miss Burdett Coutts, born in London on April 15, 1814. She possessed fifty millions, and was the granddaughter of the banker Thomas Coutts. The marriage was announced in 1846, but was at once denied.

“According to a formal clause in the testament of her aunt,” said the journal of Girardin, “Miss Burdett Coutts is only allowed to marry an Englishman; nothing but rumour can therefore only remain of what has been said concerning her supposed marriage with Prince Louis Napoleon.” In November, 1849, we find this would-be fiancée among the guests at the Elysée-Palace, where Louis Napoleon, then President of the Republic, lived. It was during the time of his Presidency that the plans for the marriage of the Prince were most numerous, and it is rather difficult

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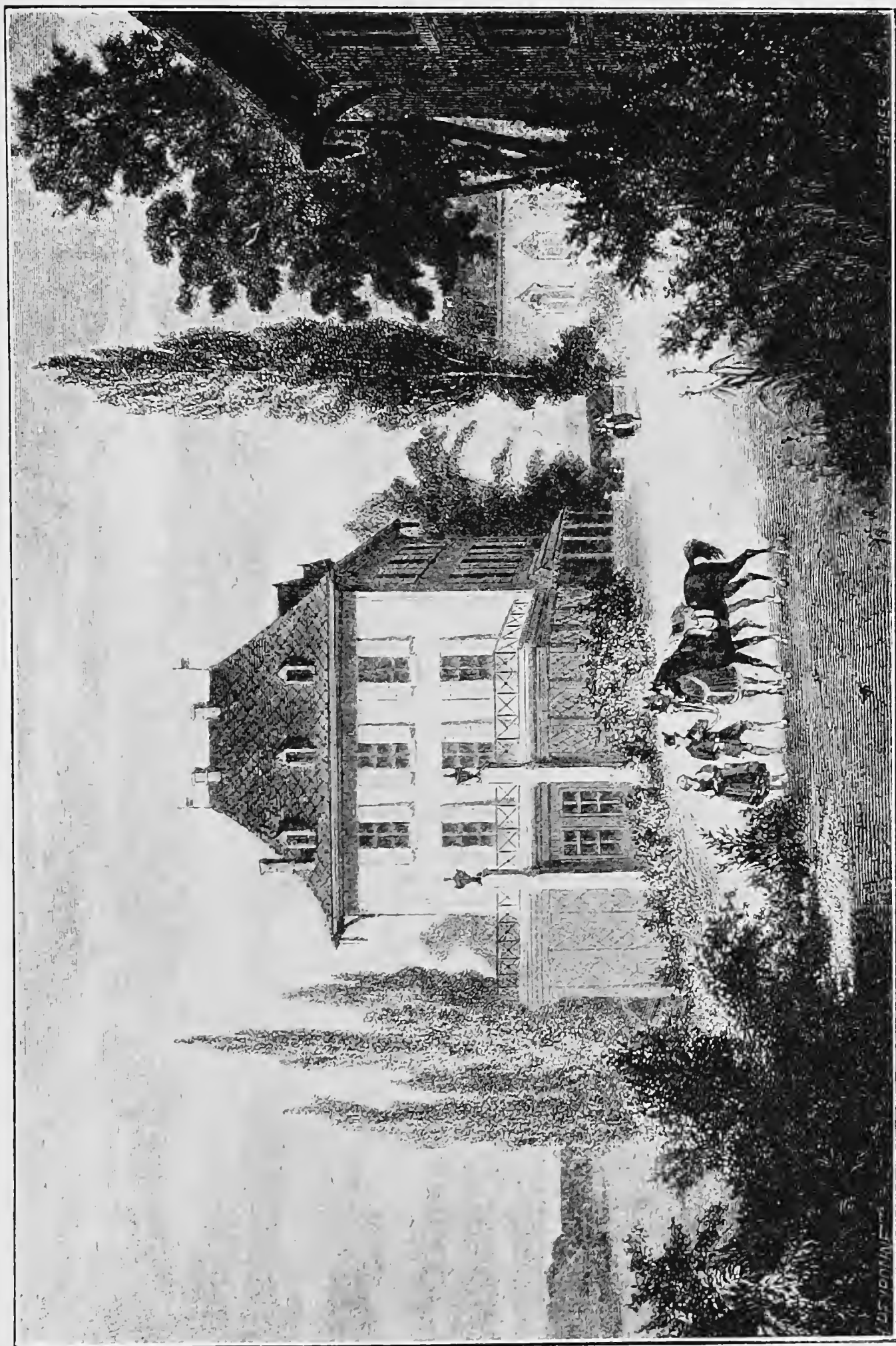
to fix the dates of all of them. Thus we find among the would-be fiancées of the Prince at that period the following ladies: The daughter of the Prince of Wagram, a young Princess of Leuchtenberg, a sister of the King of Spain, a Princess of Saxe-Meiningen, a Princess of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen, and a Duchess of Braganza. There was also a project of marriage with Adelaide of Hohenlohe Langenburg, daughter of the half-sister of Queen Victoria, Princess Feodora Hohenlohe. The Court of St. James was opposed to this marriage and the Princess married the Duke of Augustenburg. One of the daughters born of this union is now Empress of Germany. Another project of marriage, also frustrated, was that with Maria Adelaïde Wilhelmina Elizabeth, daughter of the Duke of Cambridge, former Viceroy of Hanover. The young Princess refused her consent, as she did not care to leave her native land. On June 12, 1866, she married Francis Duke of Teck. Of all the above-mentioned marriage plans the most serious seems to have been that of a union of Louis Napoleon with Princess Carola, daughter of Prince Wasa, a grand-

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daughter of Gustavus III., King of Sweden, and niece of Princess Maria, Duchess of Hamilton. The project was not realised, although the fiancée was described as “*un esprit piquant et original.*” All the failures were mostly due to political reasons. The princely houses had not sufficient confidence in the destiny of the nephew of Napoleon I., himself soon to become Emperor. They felt little inclined to allow their daughters to share the adventures to which Louis Napoleon exposed his life. One should marry a Bonaparte only when he was safely seated on the throne! Many of the would-be fathers-in-law therefore were opposed to the assiduities of the Prince, and some of them told him so without ambiguity! And the Prince resigned himself. “He will marry the first woman who will turn his head and who will refuse him her favours,” said his uncle Jérôme. But I shall stop here, at the date of January 29, 1883, when the Imperial crown was placed by Louis Napoleon upon the young head of Marie Eugénie Ignacià Augustine de Guzman Portocarrero Palafox et Kirpatrick de Glosburn, Comtesse de Mora et de Banos, Marquise de Moya,

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d'Ardales et d'Osera, Comtesse de Teba, d'Ablitas
et de Santa-Cruz de la Sierra, Vicomtesse de la
Calzada.



THE CASTLE OF ARENENBERG

II

THE PASSIONATE LADY CONSPIRATOR

The gallant beginnings of Louis-Napoleon—Libellous anecdotes—The daughter of Hudson Lowe—A natural daughter—Sentiments of the Swiss ladies for the Prince—He disguises himself as a woman to join a fair one—A lady singer Bonapartiste: Mme. Gordon—Her origin—The gallant part of Mme. Gordon—Persigny—The relations of the Prince and the singer—Was he her lover?—Legend of a natural daughter—The conspiracy of Strasburg—Colonel Vaudrey—Physical appearance of the handsome warrior—Madame Gordon, mistress of Vaudrey—Gallant machination of Persigny—A love-letter of the Colonel—Preparations of the Coup d'Etat—Part played by Mme. Gordon in the conspiracy—Why it failed—The conspiracy before the Court of Assizes of the Lower Rhine—She continues to conspire—Her miserable and obscure end—Brilliant destiny of Colonel Vaudrey.

“ALL the women I have loved have given themselves unto others,” wrote in a melancholy vein Louis

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Napoleon in 1845, in his prison of Ham. Before examining minutely the amorous life of the Prince we must control the truth of this bitter assertion and ask ourselves whether he is not endeavouring to impose upon the sentimentality of his lady correspondent. When we pass from the amorous psychology of Napoleon to that of his lady-loves, we are easily convinced that he really exaggerated the bitterness of his failures in the fleeting love-affairs and romances of his precocious youth; for he was precocious. It is said that he had his first love-affair when he was only thirteen! He seems to have explained himself afterwards upon this point. One day the game of devinettes was being played at the Tuileries when the following question was put: Which woman has more worth in love, from the point of view of passion only, the lady of society or the courtesan? The Emperor himself gave the following solution: "All women have equal worth in love, no matter which their social position; for," he added, "a garden which no one is allowed to enter usually contains delicious fruit which only the proprietor may

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taste, but why should not a garden open to all also contain such delicious fruit?" This easy and pleasant theory certainly explains many things—but it does not yet entitle the pamphleteers to maintain, with regard to the seduction of a certain Elisa, imaginary chamber-maid of Queen Hortense, that "this precocious rascal started his amorous life with a rape."

This categorical assertion is taken from a libellous pamphlet, the pages of which are teeming with accusations of all sorts: rape, murder, debauchery, crimes and orgies, such an astonishing medley that one is almost tempted to ask whether the author was in his right mind. Luckily there are other sources which shed some light upon this period of the Prince's life. The correspondence of his preceptor contains few details relating to this question. One of his relatives, however, informs us that "at Arenenberg the chronique scandaleuse of the castle was very busy with the different love affairs of the Prince." And the lady adds: "Nothing interested me more; his heart was as tender as it was fickle." And it is of this heart

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that he said later on that it had always to be full! In Switzerland he was busy collecting laurels other than those of his studies. Rumour pretended at this time that a daughter of Hudson Lowe was his mistress. A proud conquest for a Napoleon! In accordance with this principle of "a full heart" he entertained relations with a lady Laübly, wife of a cabinet-maker of Ermatingen, "near the house of Doctor Dobler." Under the Second Empire, a lady named Knussy wrote to him saying that she was a daughter of His majesty. She was a born Laübly, wife of a sculptor, not happy in his wedded life, on the point of leaving for America. She implored the Imperial help. Was she another of the many natural children of Napoleon III.? However the case may have been, Louis Napoleon left a charming souvenir to the ladies of Switzerland. This was evident in 1838. "The women especially, by their words and attitude, gave proof of a deep affliction. They publicly regretted the departure of their loving Prince-charming! At Constance the ladies waved their handkerchiefs at their windows—and in the last moment only sighs and

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weeping could be heard ! ” This sounds as if he had loved all the young women of the district. If politics compelled him to leave Switzerland, some people pretend that a love-affair made him prudently leave Italy. He had fallen in love with someone, who was certainly well worth it : the Comtesse Baraglini, sister of that Comtesse Morici, of whom, on account of her delightful beauty, the subtle Italians spoke as of “ l’anti-camera del paradiso.” In order to visit the Comtesse Baraglini in the night he disguised himself as a woman. Here the pamphleteer is no doubt right when he says that “ Both Italy and Germany served as a ‘ closed field ’ for the love affairs of the son of Queen Hortense.” It is also this story of his disguise which gave rise to the legend showing the Prince disguised as a flower girl visiting his sweetheart and meeting the husband, who thrashed him soundly. Thrown out by the valets he refused to meet the husband in a duel, and consequently is obliged to leave Florence, where the affair had taken place. We shall discuss the possibility neither of this anecdote nor of another which represents the Prince as the *souteneur* of a low prosti-

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tute at New York. From what we know as certain it is evident that in those days he did *not* taste love in the noble sense of the word. In all the adventures he appears not as an *amoureux* but as an *amant*, simply fond of women and desirous to enjoy their charm, without, however, attaching any importance to his love affairs. There were plenty such women to satisfy his ardour—and it is certainly for this reason that we so easily forgive him his escapades.

* * * * *

Among all the amorous adventures of that time when he was preparing to raise the Eagles in the place of the Cocks of Louis Philippe in France, there is one, however, of such a romantic and curious nature that it deserves to be studied minutely.

The heroine of this romance was Eléonora Marie Brault. She was born in Paris on September 6, 1808, and her father was a Captain of the Imperial Guards. Educated in a Convent in the Rue de Sevres, she left it and went to live with her father at Barcelona. I do not know whether this gallant warrior loved music

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and the theatre, but I can affirm that his daughter loved them passionately. At the Conservatoire in Paris she found two eminent masters of the period, Ponchard and Banderali. She also found Rossini, who gratuitously gave her a few lessons. It is rather surprising that after this preparation she should enter the Odéon. This distant dramatic temple was on the brink of ruin. What did poor Eléonora go there for? The Odéon soon closed its doors. Eléonora sold all she possessed and the same day left for Milan. Charming city! There at least they loved music ardently. Eléonora found there a paradise and perhaps also a few Seraphims in the shape of generous and magnificent lovers, and for twenty months she was the delight of Milan, and in all probability of a few Milanese lovers of art. From Milan she went to Venice. But alas! What are Venice and Milan to those who have already tasted the delicious fruit of perdition offered by Paris. In spite of her remembrance of the Odéon she crossed the Alps, and one beautiful evening, in 1831, she appeared at the Theatre des Italiens. Her début was far from brilliant, so much so that she

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crossed the Channel and went to London. If not artistically successful in the English metropolis, she at least found a husband there in the person of Sir Gordon Archer, a gentleman of condition attached to the Anglo-Spanish legation. In December, 1831, whilst walking in St. James's Park she was struck in the face by some unknown person, evidently greatly excited and jealous of her! This adventure made her disgusted with old, free England, and she returned to the Continent, where she continued her dramatic tours at Paris, Naples, Rome, Florence, and Strasburg. On March 7, 1836, she became a widow, her husband, the estimable Sir Gordon Archer having died of typhus at Vittoria.

Such was the past of Mme. Gordon until 1836. She was not devoid of a certain physical beauty, somewhat "masculine," and was cavalier-like and decided in her manners. She assiduously practised arms and had reached a high efficiency in the art of fencing. This practice appears to have helped to develop her contralto voice. Our ladies studying at various singing academies should take note of this.

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As a prefect of the Empire who knew her used to say she was, as it were, a “woman-man,” therefore we must not be surprised to find “something hard and too decided in her face.” I find a portrait of her, both physical and moral, in a report of a law-suit which will put the finishing touch to the sketch I have been trying to draw: “She was remarkable for her charming person; her mind corresponded to her beauty; she was active, intriguing, her manners doubtful; and having no money, she offered all the conditions which go to make an easy instrument of a being endowed with reason.” I believe I am able to prove that many touches in this picture are quite true.

Mme. Gordon, as the daughter of a soldier of the Empire, was a Bonapartist. It would have taken less reason than that in 1836. She says in 1839: “The cause that I defend so openly and aloud, is to me so noble, great and holy, that it is my religion, a religion of which I shall always be a faithful and devout disciple.” Her opinions, perhaps, were purer than her style. But who asks if Joan of Arc, or the Chevalier d'Eon could spell? Well then, Mme.

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Gordon was a Bonapartist, and because of this, no one had access to her, except those of her opinion. And perhaps that is the reason why she admitted Persigny.

Jean Gilbert Victor Fialin was born January 11, 1808, at Saint Germain Lespinnasse, in the Loire district. Educated in the Cavalry School of Saumur in 1826, he was Quartermaster of the 4th Regiment of Hussars in 1828. In 1833 he was on half-pay. Although he was simply Fialin, he called himself Vicomte de Persigny. He spoke often and ostentatiously of his ancestors. "Let us admit that he did have ancestors," said a minister of the Second Empire indulgently. As a retired Quarter-master he affected manners which he imagined were those of a *grand seigneur*. Later on they said he was as much like a gentleman as chicory is like coffee. Where did this Hussar become acquainted with the Singer? It seems to be in London, where, at the time of her marriage, Eléonora was performing before King Joseph Bonaparte, who at that time had taken refuge in England. It seems

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certain that she became his mistress. “ Her relations with Persigny are most intimate,” runs the charge in the Strasburg case. In fact she was his mistress, and through him became acquainted with Louis Napoleon.

It was at Baden-Baden, where she was giving some concerts, that the latter met Mme. Gordon. It is probable that he saw her there for the first time, and it is utterly untrue that the singer was attached to the household of Queen Hortense, at Arenenberg. I confess I do not know how she could have been. Certainly her Bonapartism would have been no drawback there, and this it was which led her to attach herself so passionately to the fortune of the Prince. We shall see, later on, to what extremity her passion led her. Did it throw her into the arms of Louis Napoleon? This assertion is found in many histories and pamphlets of the time. If we believe them, Louis Napoleon first met Eléonora in Italy, “ and dishonoured her in his arms,” and besides that cheated her of her fortune. Beaumont Vassy says, and I ask him, where he got the confidential and surprising information, “ that he promised her glory and fame, if she would be service-

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able to his love, promote his interests, and become his confidant.” And on this promise Persigny’s mistress sacrificed her career and fortune. On the other side, Louis Blanc, well informed, says that Eléonora had been initiated into the Prince’s projects unknown to the Prince himself. How to harmonize these contradictions? How to explain the obscure history of Mme. Gordon’s daughter, of whom the future Napoleon III. was the father. This daughter was born in 1837, one year after the acquaintance of the Prince with the singer, and according to an anonymous English writer died young. Another writer declares that she was living at the time of the second Empire, was called Marthe, and having become a distinguished actress, she committed suicide after the suicide of Comte Camerata, her lover. The suicide of Camerata is certain, and that of an actress named Marthe, his mistress, is also true. It took place March 10, 1853. The actress known on the stage by the name of Marthe was Elisa Letessier. And what leads us to believe that she was not the daughter of Louis Napoleon is that she was born in 1827. Further I cannot elucidate

PRÉSIDENCE DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE

Le Président de la République
prie Madame M^{me} Dumas de se Connaître
de venir passer la soirée au Palais
de l'Élysée, le vendredi 16 février 1889
On Dansera.

D. Dumas

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the story. I mention it simply in order to add a touch to the biography of Mme. Gordon.

We know that Louis Napoleon liked fine women. Mme. Gordon was a fine woman, but this alone is not sufficient to prove their *liaison*. "It is probable that Louis Napoleon was kind to her, but that was all." The Prince denied this adventure as soon as the story became public. Again, in 1836, he repeated his denial, writing to a friend, "It is false that I have had any relation with Mme. Gordon." And, she herself, questioned on the subject by some one who asked her, "Do you love him?" replied "I love him politically." Further, she seemed to value him but slightly. Acts belie these words. In fact, in the adventure in which she was mixed, Mme. Gordon appears to be the main-spring, and the charge points her out very distinctly as the soul of the Strasbourg conspiracy, for her acquaintance with the Prince Louis Napoleon began with a conspiracy.

The Prince was twenty-eight years old in 1838. The Duc de Reichstadt, son of Napoleon, had died four years ago, in Austrian captivity.

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King Joseph, who in virtue of Article VI. of the decree of the Senate of the 28th of Floréal, of the year 12, was called up to succeed to the Empire, was ill, and old, and living prudently in exile in America and England. Failing him, the inheritance fell to King Louis, the Prince's father. But the husband of Hortense was suffering from neurasthenia and full of pains and almost infirm, and shut himself up in solitude in Italy. Louis Napoleon, intoxicated with the romance of his times, and reared in the great hope of Imperial restoration and rule, put himself in the place of these impotent old men, and resolved to attempt to do at the beginning of his life, which had no other aim, what they almost at the end of their ruined lives had refused to undertake. Like his uncle, at his return from Elba, he made up his mind to show himself and lead a regiment on to Paris, rallying as he went numbers to his Eagle which he would restore to its place on the banners of outraged France. And for this purpose Strasburg had been chosen by him and Persigny. He was only waiting to gain over to the Napoleonic cause, a General sufficiently influential

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to decide the troops at once. And here General Vaudrey comes on the scene. Claude Nicolas Vaudrey was born at Dijon, of middle class parents, December 25, 1784. The crisp Christmas bells were ringing and saluted the new-born child. Nothing is known of his youth. For historical purposes his life begins November 22, 1802, when he entered the Ecole Polytechnique. In 1804 he was to be found at the Ecole d'Application at Metz, which he left as sub-lieutenant March 9, 1806, at the age of twenty-two years. Then his career begins brilliant and rapid, like those soldiers of fortune, who, one day in the deserted camps of an enemy, dispersed and beaten by cannon, find the marshal's bâton blackened with powder suddenly in their hands. From 1806 to 1814 Vaudrey made all the campaigns with the Grand Army with the artillery. Prisoner of war April 13, 1809. He was then Adjutant-Major of the 1st Horse Artillery. He returned to service on the 10th of the following August, and a year later he gained his captaincy. He was brave and courageous, and brought back a wounded shoulder from one of his impetuous rushes

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upon an enemy whose guns were hidden at Grossen Hayen. In 1814 he was the Commanding Officer of his battalion, a position which caused him to be reduced to half-pay on the return of the Bourbons. The return of the Emperor called him to Auxonne, March 12, 1815, to command the Artillery, and on April 10 of the same year he was Staff-Officer of Artillery for the Army of the North—the Army of Waterloo. At Mont Saint Jean he pointed his guns and fired the last shots for the Empire. Result—half-pay November 1, 1815. Then he went to vegetate and enjoy the leisure granted by the magnanimous Bourbons to the “brigands of the Loire.” From 1817 to 1830 he led the dull life of a suspected officer, condemned without hope of advancement to a career without glory. The monarchy of July entrusted him with the command of the artillery at Bastia and left him there three years. On the 26th of May, 1833—he was made Colonel September 24, 1830—Claude Nicolas Vaudrey was called to the command of the 4th Regiment of Artillery at Strasburg. The post is important, but had he no right to something better? He was by

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rights entitled to be Aide-de-Camp to the Duc d'Orléans. Refusal. He had the right to a scholarship for his son. Refusal. And there was Vaudrey, discontented and bitter, in exile on the lower Rhine, dreaming of his lost opportunities. He was a fine man, the very picture of a warrior of the Empire. Young, and very striking in his splendid uniform, surrounded by drums and fifes playing "*On va leur percer le flanc*," at the head of his bronze cannons on low wheels, drawn by teams of horses, he must have made a great impression, entering the cities he had helped to conquer. He was tall and well-proportioned, gifted with all the external advantages of a soldier of that time. His hair was black, the small tuft on the lower lip was pointed, and his moustache fell in long points—his face was manly and severe, the type of officer destined to leave behind him many sad hearts in the castles of Polish ladies, as well as in the quiet homes of Moravia and Prussia. This magnificent artillery-man had married, at the age of thirty-two, Adeline Perier, of Avallon in Yonne, who was the daughter of a civil engineer, and twenty years old,

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the age when young girls very readily listen to the voice of the *beau sabreur*. The marriage seems to have been happy and peaceful. Two sons were born to them, and the mother watched over their education in the Colonel's quarters, place Saint Etienne.

That was the man whom Louis Napoleon had singled out to help him in undertaking the Coup d'Etat against Louis Philippe. Now it remained only to examine the means employed to arrive at the seduction, and the part played by Mme. Gordon in this political and gallant comedy.

Eléonora arrived at Strasburg on the 15th of June, 1836, and put up at the Hotel de la Ville de Paris. What had taken her there? She was going to perform at some concerts. And, as a matter of fact, General Voirol, in command of the place, did get up a soirée, where she sang. And it was there that Vaudrey saw her for the first time. He was won over immediately, and the more so that he was disposed to trifling. "His manners did not suit his years or his position," said the public prosecutor with virtuous indignation at the Court of Assizes on the lower Rhine. He was

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introduced to Mme. Gordon, and having begged to be allowed to see her again, she told him that she was going to Baden-Baden, called there by her profession.

And she set out June 28, and on the 29th Vaudrey was in Baden-Baden. And there, as if by chance, he met the Prince, to whom he was presented by a retired Colonel of Artillery named Eggerlé. Louis Napoleon risked some timid observations to the Colonel, but Eléonora was charged with the actual persuasion.

“Louis Napoleon,” says a pamphlet, “gave his mistress, the beautiful Mme. Gordon, to his most faithful friend.” The intimate friendship may be disputed, but not the seduction. An author, whose good will is not above the cares of evidence, has made poor excuse for the Prince on this occasion. “It was not dignified in the Prince,” he says, “to use the means which any claimant—I will add any government—is obliged to adopt when it is a question of gaining over a man. A friend undertook to do it. This friend was M. de Persigny.” That seems very plausible.

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And Persigny used to declare, "I was educated politically on the History of Rome." To sacrifice his mistress to his Prince seems but slightly Roman. Let us agree that he was broadly and stoically a Roman. In the dangerous and delicate game, in which Colonel Vaudrey was the prize, Eléonora was a full partner. Wolbert, Councillor of the Royal Court of Colmar, commissioned to make enquiries concerning the Coup d'Etat of Strasburg, questioned her and said: "Twenty women a year like that one, and I should go mad!" She was cool and reflected and her success was brilliant. Let us acknowledge it frankly.

Returning to Strasburg with Persigny and Vaudrey, she began what we with the papers in our hands are bound to call, the comedy. "Fialin spread his political opinions by day, and Mme. Gordon by night." "It is slander, I think, to say that Mme. Gordon had graces and favours for all the conspirators." But who were these conspirators, unknown and of no position, compared with Vaudrey, the Prince's chief support? It is almost certain that the singer was not long in dazzling him completely. One of the

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Colonel's love-letters will show the growth of his passion. It is remarkable for this reason, for it shows the tactics employed by the seducer to bring her lover to a complete submission. It can be seen that Persigny behind Eléonora was pulling the strings. What if Vaudrey escaped the snare? What if the blindness of his mad love should fall from him? Vain fears! When Eléonora said: "I will only be his, who is for the Prince!" he had replied firmly: "Be mine, I am his!" And he never thought of breaking his word. And he repeated it again and again to his mistress, with sufficient emphasis.

" 10 o'clock, Evening.

" My Dear Eléonora,

" I have received your letter—what a letter, Eléonora, and from you! I see now, perhaps, more than you would wish, the reason for your inconceivable silence and why it pleased you not to keep your word.

" I love frankness, yours pleases me, you use it fully; that is well, it is even a rare merit. Your pen, inspired by others I am sure, let fall some very hard

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expressions but I must be silent. You are a woman and the woman I love above everything. What can I say? *Your silence was a punishment it appears;* and doubtless your long stay in Paris is the same. What a miserable system! Scarcely fit for children. You, however, knew my situation. It is sufficiently painful. Why add to my anguish and grief? Do you think I am insensible? You accuse me of *leaving, abandoning my friends!* This hateful blasphemy is not yours, tell those who have taken it upon them to inform you of my intentions and my conduct that they have lied—tell those who inspired your last letter, so full of distrust (which has aroused in me an even greater), tell them, I implore you, that their distrust and suspicions are insults which I am not accustomed to endure. Tell them that I belong to the small number of those who can say: *Examine my life and see what I am.*

“You, and all of you, have not been ashamed to think that threats could influence me in any way, and you employ this means of the weak. You suppose that I shall yield to what, Great God? to threats; ah!

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you do not know me ! Foolish people try to convince me, convert me, if necessary (and you know there is no reason for that). Enlighten me, if I err, and you will see if my will will not surpass yours, and if I shall remain behind when it is necessary to show myself and act. The greatest proof of affection that I can show you is to think that your letter was not inspired by you, for insult, although disguised and ornamented with undeserved flattery, is easily recognised in it ; it is not the hand of a woman or of a friend that gives such blows. You will soon know if I know how to answer such a challenge ; only wait till I am in Strasburg. After all this, a meeting is more than ever indispensable, if only to destroy, if possible, the wearisome and fatal prejudices which occupy both of us, and to look after our common interests.

“ In spite of your threatening war-like letter, I still love you with my whole soul ; and whatever you may say, I know you will never have cause to blush for me. Then *au revoir*, dear friend, as soon as possible. Although suffering much, I fly to you. A sweet kiss with all the strength of my soul.”

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Vaudrey was in chains. He had been taken by Eléonora's charms with the arts which women of the theatre always use, and for her he had deserted the home, where the wife he had married in 1816, and who was already growing old, still waited for him. The moment to hasten events was approaching. Mme. Gordon had put up at the Hotel du Chapeau-Rouge in Dijon, on the 2nd of October, and joined the Colonel at a country house he possessed in the neighbourhood. Suddenly a letter arrived from Persigny, to trouble this peaceful life. The Prince's companion recalled them to Fribourg-en-Brisgau. They set out at once, Eléonora giving Vaudrey no time to change his slippers. They arrived at Colmar October 25, and here they stayed under the name of M. and Mme. de Cessay. The same day at Fribourg-en-Brisgau they met Persigny punctual at the rendez-vous, who gave them instructions for the Coup d'Etat fixed for the end of the month. Mme. Gordon and her lover returned to Strasburg on the 26th.

This journey had increased their intimacy. At the Court of Assizes on January 7, 1837, it was useless for

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Vaudrey to say, "I have nothing to say about my relations with Mme. Gordon; they have nothing to do with any one and belong entirely to my private life." They remarked all the same, that "shaking off all modesty," the singer shared his room. She blushed at this accusation and explained that that day she had dislocated her shoulder. This accident will excuse her; in that case she cannot be accused of immodesty. Modest or no, it had taken her less than four months to bring the Colonel to the point desired by the Prince and Persigny. The charge will go over the manœuvre, declaring that she is a cool, reflected woman, who, using all her means of influence, speculating on the affection given her, drags to ruin the man who loved her, and does it without letting it be possible to assign to her any other motive than low and vulgar interest. Pardon, sir, was not the Bonapartism of Mme. Gordon a "motive?"

Louis Napoleon arrived at Strasburg on the evening of the 29th of October, and met the Colonel on the Quai-Neuf and received his promise. On the 30th of October, at four o'clock in the morning, while it

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was snowing, after having spent the night with his mistress, the Colonel presented the nephew of the Emperor to his front line, with the colours abreast, and read a proclamation in honour of the eagles on the standards of the Staff-officers. It was just thirty years ago that Napoleon had reviewed his guard at Berlin, Carbineers and Cuirassiers, conquerors of the Prussians beaten in the fields of Jena; twenty-five years ago that he entered Nimeguen in Holland under the yellow leaves of triumphal arches; twenty-three years ago that his artillery had dispersed the Austrians and Bavarians on the skirt of the forest of Hanau, and sent them hastening through the mud towards the plains.

While Louis Napoleon, rich in family memories, was trying his fortune with Vaudrey, Mme. Gordon, having remained some time in the Colonel's quarters, place Saint Etienne, came out armed with two pistols. She met General Voirol, who was to spoil the play a few minutes later. She thought he was in the secret. "You owed your life to that only!" she said to him at the Assize Court later on, confessing that otherwise

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she would have blown out his brains. Then she went to the Rue de la Fontaine No. 17, where, under the name of M. Manuel, Persigny had hired a room overlooking the quay. On the way she met him, and learned from him that the plot had failed. She seized his arm and led him away. They went to his room and proceeded to burn all compromising papers, and the cyphers for secret correspondence, and the proclamations and the biographies of the Prince.

A loud voice, "Open, in the name of the law," caused them to start. It was Michel Letz, the Commissioner of Police of Strasburg, and his gendarmes. Mme. Gordon did not lose her head; she barricaded the door with the furniture. The police burst it open with their shoulders. She turned upon Persigny a glance he did not understand. She pointed to another door. But the gendarmes were already upon him and the Commissioner had seized the singer's bag, which contained a hundred golden ducats.

"I believe this gold," said the ready Commissioner, "to have been wrongfully acquired."

Eléonora thought this going too far, and she fought

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for the precious bag tooth and nail. Confusion resulted and Persigny was enabled to escape. At night he crossed the bridge at Kehl, disguised as a cook or confectioner, in a costume furnished by a certain lady named Jordan. And as the man had escaped, the woman was taken to the prison in which Louis Napoleon was already with the Staff-officers of the Coup d'Etat. The trial opened at Strasburg on the 6th of January, 1837, in the old Law Courts in the street with the charming old name *Rue de la Nuée-Bleue*. The street of the blue cloud. A dull grey daylight filled the narrow hall papered with mottled gray paper. In the arched recesses sat the fine ladies of the neighbourhood, their costumes crumpled and their head-gear in danger. All eyes were turned to Mme. Gordon. She seemed quite at her ease, her complexion pink and white, her hat of white satin and her dress of black silk with an embroidered collar. She was shown a seat between de Gricourt and de Bruc. Raphael de Gricourt was a thin young man of twenty-three, in a blue coat with gilt buttons, worn open to show a black waistcoat with large blue flowers, over

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which fell a lace bow. He stroked his long moustache with elegance. It seems to have been his mother who sold the Château d'Arenenberg to Queen Hortense. That was sufficient reason for the son to be a Bonapartist. As for Comte Frédéric de Bruc [he had been paid 4,500 francs by Persigny for his part in the plot] he looked rough and severe. His blue coat was buttoned up to his chin, and his button-hole was decorated with the purple ribbon of the Legion of Honour he had gained at the Battle of Reims. This commanding officer, not in active service, had been in great danger, having received two famous blows from a lance at Breslau, and a ball in his neck at Hanau.

He had a moustache and wore his hair parted in the middle. He was romantic, which he showed by publishing, in 1855, a little duodecimo volume, *Une fantaisie de duchesse*, in which he strove to prove that women only fell in love with monsters. Did Eléonora accept his homage? To do so would have been risky, with Colonel Vaudrey sitting on the same bench in full uniform, with his cross on his breast. The

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Prince only was absent. The Government, which wished to avoid the scandal of an acquittal, at any cost, and cooked the jury, had from the first removed Louis Napoleon from the jurisdiction of the Assize Courts. On board the *Andromède* he was sent to America to prevent the judges from being influenced by the sight of an unfortunate member of the Imperial family sitting on a bench in the Court of Assizes.

The trial at Strasburg only interests us inasmuch as it concerns Mme. Gordon. She looked very well, slightly inclined to tears and getting relief from smelling salts, during the reading of the charge sheet, in which "very unflattering titles were heaped upon her." Her cross-examination passed without anything remarkable, and finished in a charming manner: a general acquittal. Eléonora almost fainted. In the evening, at the Hotel de la Ville de Paris, lawyers and accused drank together to the health of the paternal jury. What a pity! Persigny was not there! If Vaudrey sat on Mme. Gordon's right, he had the right to sit on her left!

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As far as we can judge from the evidence given, the Strasburg trial put an end to the amours of the singer and artilleryman. Henceforward, it seems their lives were apart and their fondness terminated with this adventure. But both of them remained faithful to the Prince whose projects had ruined their lives. Eléonora went on with her militant Bonapartist propaganda. The police searched her dwelling in 1838 without success. In 1839 she was disturbed by police spies. "Madame Police," she said with pleasant good humour. "Madame Police is of the feminine gender it is true, and so am I, but I frankly acknowledge that I am not quite so stupid." She conspired openly since she took part in the *Club des Cotillons*, which had been formed in 1839, at the same time as the *Club des Culottes de peau*, as a place of meeting for hardened Bonapartists. Vaudrey was more careful. He had promised his weeping mother not to have any more to do with politics. Some days after the Coup d'Etat, on November 3, 1836, he had been removed from active service by the withdrawal of his commission by the King's desire, and after the trial,

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February 4, 1837, he was allowed to claim his pension due on resignation. The Government arranged to give him a pension of 2,790 francs. In 1840 Louis Napoleon sounded him about the Coup d'Etat of Boulogne, for which he was preparing. He refused to assist, but at the same time hired at Dijon a certain Noël Michel Buzenet, formerly a sergeant in the 36th Regiment of the Line, whom he sent to London as servant to the Prince, and who afterwards landed on the beach at Boulogne for the second Coup d'Etat.

Mme. Gordon worked actively in London for the same end. *The Times* denounced her as the most active agent in the new conspiracy. "Bonapartism has fallen to the distaff!" they said in France. Her influence on it was very definite. *The Times* asserted that the Prince would have landed at Boulogne in November, but she advised him to put off making the attempt until the summer. In the meantime she visited the strong places in the North. When the plot failed, she was among the women who visited Louis Napoleon in his prison at Ham. She was very

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active in 1848, when Bonapartism had its period of revival. When Persigny drew up a list of those who were faithful to the Prince, her name and address, 57 rue de Provence, figured on it. The Prince visited her when he went to Paris in 1848. It was her idea [and the tactics were like the Strasburg tactics] that he should try to win over Louis Blanc. She was very busy, so much so in fact that in June, 1848, she was compromised in the Bonaparte intrigues and arrested with Persigny, Tremblaire the Prince's official and officious journalist, Thomassin the printer, and imprisoned in the gaol book of the Conciergerie, but it seems the case was not called. At last the party triumphed, and Louis Napoleon, December 20, 1848, was made President of the Republic. How will the woman who conspired for him from the beginning be rewarded? A paper found in the Tuileries tells us in a few words; a pension of 4,800 francs! And on that Eléonora, worn out, old, and with no work in the world, was asked to live! What had happened? What had come between her and the Prince? If we are to

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believe a libeller, she was jealous of Louis Napoleon's latest conquest, Miss Howard—inasmuch as Miss Howard was jealous of her. In this battle between two women, the elder, according to invariable custom, was beaten, and Persigny was charged by the Prince (the libeller still speaks) to inform Mme. Gordon that she was no longer wanted, and to hand her a little purse containing 5,000 francs as a little souvenir and perhaps consolation. Eléonora took it badly, and in consequence was shown to the door of the Elysée by the servants, and Persigny pocketed the 5,000 francs as a good find, with a quiet conscience. “I believe this money to have been gained unlawfully,” the Police Commissioner of Strasburg had said on another occasion, and perhaps Persigny had not forgotten this innocent remark. We know almost nothing about the end of Mme. Gordon's life. It is said that she died in poverty at a hospital, March 11, 1849. The Elysée paid her funeral expenses. It cost the Prince a mere 720 francs. Where does this woman rest, this waif and stray of imperial adventures? What common grave has swallowed this ghost from the

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venturous youth of Louis Napoleon? Nothing is left, nothing remains of this Empire-maker, and we must move the dust in the records of the Assize Courts to find traces of her brilliant life in the past.

The part played by Colonel Vaudrey was more splendid. Louis Napoleon made him aide-de-camp to his household and decorated him with the Legion of Honour, February 9, 1849. Placed on the retiring list, March 31, 1837, he was reinstated with the title of Brigadier-General, January 31, 1852, the only instance of the kind. The Prince-President made him Governor of the Tuileries and the Emperor promoted him to be General-in-Chief, Senator and Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour. He died at Cessay in the Côte d'Or, March 11, 1857, in the magnificence of the second Empire. His wife was still alive, and the War Office granted her a pension of 750 francs the same day. A glorious fate had rewarded him for his eleven years of retirement. He had seen the eagles for which he had dared to sound the trumpets in the snow-storm, October 30, 1836, placed on the banners

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of his country and decorate the Tuileries, where he had known the delights and the dazzling retaliations of fortune, the fickle goddess.



CHATEAU DE BOULOGNE-SUR-MER

III

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The Coup d'Etat of Boulogne—Louis Napoleon prisoner—Mimi-la-Bouchère—Origin of this supposed mistress—Reasons against this legend—The Prince at Ham—His lodgings and occupations—The question of women—The kiss of Déjazet—Badinguet—The ethereal love of the lady-butcher—Practical love of the Prince—*La belle Sabotière*—A mistress of low condition—Natural children of Louis-Napoleon—What becomes of them—Curious destiny of the Imperial bastards—Their end—Destiny meted out to the mother by Napoleon III.—Death of *La Belle Sabotière*.

ON August 6, 1840, followed by a little troop of servants disguised as soldiers, and accompanied by some old soldiers of the Empire, among whom were Montholon and Parquin, Louis Napoleon made another attempt in the North like the one he made in

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the East, which had failed so miserably. He landed at Wimereux, at a place called Pointe aux Oies, a rocky spot hidden at times by the sea. He marched on Boulogne sur Mer, invaded the barracks, and called upon the men of the garrison to remember the glories of the Empire of which he was the living representative. Some day I shall tell by whose treachery the Coup d'Etat failed and how the government of Louis Philippe set a trap, into which the Prince was thrust. But at the moment I am only writing of love and must limit myself to what will throw light upon my subject. Repulsed at the barracks, Louis Napoleon, followed by his troop gained in the fields, the column of the Grand Army raised at Boulogne by the Grand Army of 1804. Tracked to the monument by the National Guard, and dragged away by his friends, he turned towards the shore, and found by chance a life-boat, by which he tried to regain the steamer which had brought him. He was unarmed, and it must be said he was fleeing. He was defenceless, and the National Guard fired on him. A certain Siméon Pringé—we save this dishonoured and dirty name

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from oblivion—was the first to fire. The boat capsized—one of the fugitives was drowned. One was shot and killed in the waves. They arrived in time to drag the Prince dripping from the water. A boat landed him at the stone steps of the Pidou jetty, near the landing stage. For some minutes they left him to regain his breath in the custom house offices, where he changed his wet uniform for the custom house cloak. Then hoisted, according to some, on a cart, and according to others, in a carriage, they marched to the Château de Boulogne, while certain brave people, always to be found on such occasions, yelled “Long live the King!” round the vanquished. Arriving at Rue de l’Ecu (to-day Rue Victor Hugo), the Mayor and Sub-prefect joined the Prince, and at nine o’clock Louis Napoleon and his army were locked up in the Château.

It was an old building, with towers, and surrounded with deep grassy ditches. It was built in 1231 by Philippe le Hurepel, son of Philippe Auguste, Comte de Boulogne, and served as residence for the Governors of the city.

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The prison was dull and dark and the old walls were full of the memories of tragic deeds. The Prince was locked in a room with General Montholon. By means of nineteen francs some porters were persuaded to bring up the prisoner's baggage. The room contained a bed and a cupboard, hired by a certain gentleman named Cocquerel for twelve francs, and the care of the prisoners was undertaken by the chief of the bedels of the mayoralty, a man called Capet, and for the time appointed keeper of the Château.

The condition of the Prince was pitiable. An eyewitness, Mme. Mercier, of Wimereux, said "that he was fearfully pale." He was dejected. And the *Times* correspondent wrote: "The poor wretch is in a sad state." But in this "sad state" the "poor wretch" had time to think of love. There is in fact a tradition at Boulogne sur Mer, to the effect that Louis Napoleon, during his short captivity at the Château—two days—made Mimi la Bouchère his mistress—she was the servant who looked after his room. There is a popular song much in favour with

Paris le 30 Nov 1848

Monsieur le Ministre

Ne me parlez pas de mon service
de la loi de mon service et je vous en
dis que je ne suis pas avec
un peu de satisfaction et que
me en mes services, les
; il est à l'honneur et je vous en
recommande maintes fois

Bonne nuit Monsieur le Ministre
et je vous en remercie

Louis Napoléon

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the fisher women, and a verse of which runs as follows:

C'est Mimi la Bouchère
Qu'elle part en chemin de fer
Pour aller à Paris
Parler au prince Louis.

Mimi la Bouchère is not a popular fiction. She was born at Calais 1809, and her name was Aglaë Françoise Louise Vandemale. Her brother was porter at the slaughter house, and he was also called Mimi—an abbreviation of his father's name, which was Barthélémy. I learned a local detail. "Mimi la Bouchère" is the nickname given in the port of Boulogne to the women who hang round barracks. I do not know if the woman Vandemale was one of these creatures, but the State registers force me to state that on July 31, 1838, not being married, she gave birth to a son, Henry Charles. What is the truth about her relations with the captive prince? Nothing goes to show that she was chosen—the choice would have been curious—to do the Prince's room. The municipality of Boulogne sur Mer obtained the services of

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two men, a certain Hautin and a man named Bernard François, one as valet the other as sweeper. The name of Mimi la Bouchère does not occur in the documents except at the end of a bill for wine delivered to the prisoners. This would be enough to throw a shadow on the legend of her short love of Louis Napoleon, although the said Louis Napoleon was not very particular and raffiné in love, and somewhat resembled Charles V., who was particularly fond of the pretty butcher girls of his good city of Ghent, where the butchers are still called "the prince's children." I feel disinclined to believe this story. The state of dejection into which the Prince had fallen, the shortness of his stay at Boulogne sur Mer, and the fact that the wine of the Château was supplied by Mimi la Bouchère, all these go to show that this is a legend based on some sort of a joke. It can also be destroyed from another side. It appears certain that Napoleon III. remembered the Mimi of 1840, and had her son Henry Charles entered at Saint Cyr or the Ecole Polytechnique—they do not mention which. Now this son was treated for short-

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sight in 1858! He was a photographer, and in 1863 he lodged in Paris at No. 172 rue Saint Denis. In 1841, when she married a certain Pierret, she legitimated the birth of her son and that of her daughter, Louise Emma, born November 16, 1841. We find Mimi established as a meat-seller in place Navarin, at Boulogne, in 1851. Her trade was not limited to her stall, and a curious local note gives us a sketch of her as she appeared to the old folk of Boulogne who still remember her.

The woman Pierret, better known under the name of *Mimi la Bouchère*, or mother of the soldiers, an excellent creature with a weakness for soldiers; she enticed them to her house, rue Saint Louis (now rue de l'Hôpital), gave them to eat and to drink, mended their things, sewing on their buttons, and serving them in many kind little ways. She lent them at times small sums of money, and this was spoken of at the Barracks, and some were indelicate enough to exploit her. In fact she was a kind creature, sympathetic and pleasant to everybody; she was much missed in her quarter.

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And is it unlikely in that atmosphere that the gallant legend of Mimi la Bouchère arose? From having seen the Emperor of to-day in his short captivity, had she not kept a memory of him which was exaggerated by those who had stood near great catastrophies. What a fine story to tell to young soldiers and loungers in the tavern, this story of a Prince doing homage at the feet of a beautiful meat-seller! What a plot round which to weave many vulgar and extravagant romances! But the affair did not help Mimi to make her fortune. In 1856 she left Boulogne for Paris. Her family settled there, and she only returned to the banks of the Liane to end wretchedly a life of which we know nothing, except what the light of the legend sheds on her, the gilt of a short and false radiance.

On August 8, at half-past eight in the morning, with an escort of municipal guards and lancers round his carriage, Louis Napoleon left the Château de Boulogne. While waiting for the official directions for his trial, for this time he was to be tried, in order

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to avoid the Bonapartist manifestations of Paris, the Government decided to bring him to the capital, and to place him temporarily in the Fort de Ham in Picardie. The prince arrived by night by the light of torches, which threw fitful lights and shadows on to the ancient walls of the castle-fort. It was one o'clock in the morning. On August 11th he again took the road to Paris; on the 28th of September he appeared before the Court of Peers, which condemned him [October 3] to perpetual imprisonment in a fortress situated in the kingdom. On October 7, the fortress of Ham being specified, Louis Napoleon re-entered the castle in which he had spent a few hours two months before.

If the Château de Boulogne had all the mute, motionless tragedy of former days, the silent and congealed terror among the autumnal tints of the long and lonely ramparts, the fortress of Ham has all the melancholy, all the resigned and damp weariness of old. Walls and buildings bear the feudal arms of that Constable de Saint-Pol, who built them so solidly among the marshes of Picardie. The ram-

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parts, flanked by towers and overlooked by a dungeon, conjured up those old castles where Dunois loved to dream. The golden leaves of autumn from a magnificent tree of liberty planted in the courtyard by André Dumont of the Convention under the Terror, fell upon the ground. Near by the mossy stones of the curtains of the fortress, the Canal of Saint Quentin flowed slowly, bearing along the lazy barges. The landscape was sad and worn out, only the distant green of the stagnant waters, with wintry mists hanging over them, and the bitter wind beating against the trembling rushes of the marshes. At the end of a march day, half-drowned in rain, I visited the spot. Was there anything which had not been there for all time? The Château, with its drums, beat upon by unskilled hands, was a school for drummers, and from the rampart of cut grass, lying between the yellow battlemented towers, one could hear the sound of home-sick buglers.

Oh the grey weariness of the enclosure between those enormous walls, mixed with the dull mouldy smell of the cellars, on the vaults of which is graven

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the heraldry of the lords of Saint Pol! And on the horizon nothing but these ever-sleeping waters, with their unending melancholy, and yonder Ham, with its small streets and lanes with such strange old names—rue Saint Vaneng, rue du Grenier a Sel—where in the monastic silence and quasi-conventual peace which muffles them, the clattering sabot re-echoes. Ham, wrapped in its brown damp rise and fall of the grassy banks of the Somme as it glides along meadows, the haunt of wild fowls. Three rooms on the first storey of one of the buildings were reserved for the Prince, for the decoration of which M. de Rémusat had granted a meagre subsidy of 600 francs. There was a study furnished with a mahogany bureau, an old chest of drawers, a sofa, an armchair, four rush chairs, and a deal table covered with a green cloth. A screen, ornamented with caricatures taken from *Charivari*, stood in one corner. On the grey, bare walls hung portraits of the Emperor and Hortense. Busts of Napoleon and Josephine occupied the chimney-piece and statuettes of the Soldiers of the Guard gave the room quite a military air. Some books,

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among which were some fifty volumes of the *Journal des débats*, and a copy of the *Moniteur*. The bedroom was in the same simple style, the bedstead and toilet table were made of wood, painted, and warmed by an earthenware stove. The deal shelves held toilet necessities, marked with the Imperial arms. The third room was a laboratory. Daylight, entering by the small window panes, exposed the rough and ready furniture. When he stood quite close to the window the Prince could see the soldiers from the garrison mounting guard below. There were four hundred infantry quartered at the fort. They had been drawn from the 46th of the line (Strasbourg) and from the 42nd (Boulogne sur Mer). They were under the command of General Girardet, and the Governor of the fort was Major Demarle, who had been in command at Boulogne, on August 6, 1840.

Such was the prison assigned to Louis Napoleon for life. Three of his accomplices had been allowed to share his captivity : Montholon, sentenced to twenty years; Dr. Conneau, five years; and his valet Thélín, who was in England, May 25, 1841, arranging the

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Prince's affairs, for Thélin was a man to be trusted. He had been the Prince's valet for many years, and Capo de Feuillide says very pompously that the Prince raised him to the honour of friendship. He had passed from the service of Queen Hortense to that of Louis Napoleon, who had made him head of his household. The Empire promoted Thélin to the control of the privy purse, and he survived the downfall of Napoleon III. ten years.

The Prince, Montholon, and Conneau dined together at half-past five, for twenty francs a day. The canteen expenses were very moderate. The Prince was allowed to walk in the prison enclosure. He wandered about on the ramparts very melancholy indeed in his military cloak, or blue frock-coat buttoned up, with a red cap with gold braid. The hours passed slowly and drearily. He made some experiments in the laboratory; he wrote *l'Extinction du pauperisme*, *l'Analyse de la question des sucres*, and he pondered over *Les Etudes sur le passé et l'avenir de l'Artillerie*. He read and sang, and cultivated flowers along the prison walls, but "all that fills up time with-

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out satisfying the heart," he wrote to an English lady.

Ah ! women and hearts ! Those were the principal occupations of his mind, always longing for hope, even illusory and deceitful. What could he do, locked up in his prison at Ham ? We are told that he asked M. Duckâtel, the Home Secretary, to be allowed to receive some women. He did receive some in fact, but those who came were armed with platonic sentiments, like Déjazet, who blew kisses to him in his prison, and this did not seem to him to be sufficient. " The minister replied that he could not grant such an immoral request, but that he would shut his eyes to the prisoner's morals." This statement is given in a police report of April 19, 1853, and the secret history of the Château de Ham proves that it was not fantastic. The mistresses of the period of the captivity prove the contrary. I will begin by separating Madame Badinguet from the others. She was, according to some, the wife of a baker, and according to others she was unmarried. It seems likely that she was invented in order to

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explain away the nickname given to the Emperor, and which in Piccardie means a loungeur or “giddy spark.”

But there was someone more real, and whose history is somewhat amusing. Let us admire the coincidence. She also was the daughter of a butcher, and her father—a certain G.—had settled in Paris. The lady, whose complexion was delicate and health frail, had been sent to Ham to some old people to take advantage of the country air. She saw the Prince by chance on the ramparts one day, and behold! there was the hero of her dreams, the Prince of her lonely life. Thélín knew the ladies with whom she lived. She implored the valet to obtain an interview with the Prince. Only that? Willingly! And Thélín told the Prince, who, “amused at the story,” agreed to give a rendez-vous. What a joy! The enamoured lady went to the fort, saw the Prince, and he kissed her hand. She asked no more, and that sufficed. An offer of marriage having been made her, she refused, saying, “I had a kiss, which still burns on my hand.” Thélín was able to calm the burning, and became the

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lover of this inflammable heroine, and he had such enthusiasm in his love-making that "the chest trouble grew worse and shortly carried her off to the grave." Ferocious Thélín!

The Prince at least loved more discreetly, and his liaison with the "belle Sabotière" terminated less tragically. I do not know why she was called "la belle Sabotière." That must be an invention of the pamphleteers of the second Empire. And, as a matter of fact, I do read in one of the pamphlets that Louis Napoleon seduced Marguerite Bayeux, whom he bought for ready money from her father, a sabot maker. "I have sharpened her wits," he said cynically a month later to his friends. "I am training her." Of course, on examination there is neither a sabot-maker, nor a Marguerite Bayeux. Marguerite really was Eléonora Vergeot, and her father was a weaver. She was born September 3, 1820, at Estouilly, in the neighbourhood of Ham. She was a servant girl hired by the day to work for some unimportant people, and was to have married a house painter, who left her to run after someone else.



LOUIS NAPOLEON WORKING IN HIS LABORATORY
IN THE PRISON OF HAM

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Eléonora Vergeot took a place as ironer under Mme. Renard, wife of one of the gatekeepers at Ham. She was a good-looking girl, strong and healthy, with chestnut hair and blue eyes. She was told off to take food to the prisoners, and the principal one soon noticed her. She was twenty years old—he was a prince. There are many liaisons which begin in the same way. She seemed to be the simile of liberty, full of the gaiety of free life outside the prison. And as the police report of 1853 says, the authorities shut their eyes. Eléonora remained in the Prince's room. Her education had been neglected. Louis Napoleon did his best to teach her the rudiments of syntax and some history. Two sons were born. One, born February 25, 1843, was called Alexandre Louis Eugène, and the other, born at No. 9, rue Capron, on March 18, 1845, was called Alexandre Louis Ernest. It is therefore a mistake to say that Louis Napoleon was wanting in the quality required for founding a dynasty.

These two sons of Eléonora Vergeot had very re-

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markable lives. She had a third son, Pierre Alexandre Edmond, born in Paris, August 12, 1850. He was the son of Pierre Jean François Bure, foster-brother of Louis Napoleon, and who held the post of Crown Treasurer-General under the Empire. Bure took upon himself the paternity of these three sons, and marrying Eléonora, August 3, 1858, in the *Mairie* of the 2nd *Arrondissement*, openly acknowledged them as his. The third child has no place in these pages, but the two sons of Louis Napoleon are sufficiently important to demand a few words. Eugène Vergeot was Under-secretary at the French Embassy in St. Petersburg, where he carried off an actress, the mistress of the Ambassador. I cannot guarantee the truth of the anecdote, but I do know that in 1864, when he was twenty-one years old, the Emperor gave him a pension of 6,000 francs. At that time he was then in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He found his situation ridiculous, and, disgusted with Paris, he asked for a consulship "in any corner of the world." He had a certain squeamish feeling in dealing with Bure. He had asked in vain

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for affection as well as for money. “*Is it right,*” he writes to his father, the Emperor, “*because a person has been obliged to give his name to an individual*” (these are the words M. Bure used to me, I swear it) “that he should act disloyally and forsake him under a false pretext?” Indeed these reasons do not suffice. “And in the meantime,” he goes on, “I know, since M. Bure himself told me, that your Majesty gave him the sum of 400,000 francs in trust for us. Do not seem to cast me away as if I were some stinking animal!”

Eugène Vergeot was exaggerating. And the proof of his exaggeration is that, although the Emperor always refused to see him, he was named Vice-Consul at Rosas, and in 1868 Consul at Zanzibar. The Emperor did even more than this. He created him, in 1869, Comte d’Orx, from the name of an estate in the Landes which he had given him. The Comte d’Orx married, in France, Mlle. Volpette, “of an excellent Belgian family,” and died January, 1910, in his Château des Castets, at Saint André de Seignaux, of which he was the Mayor. He left three

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children. He had survived his younger brother by twenty-three years.

Louis Vergeot had vegetated long years in Mexico, and he was married at Puebla. His adventures read like melodrama; his mother-in-law tried to poison him. And he maintained that in the person of Maximilian of Austria he was avenging the death of one of his relations. Which one? A Vergeot? A Camus? No, not at all! Just the Duc de Reichstadt, none other. M. Louis Vergeot had the family mind. And finding his first historical success to his taste, he exclaimed, "Now, there is only the death of my uncle Napoleon to avenge!" This was more difficult, and I imagine he failed in his proud project, for having escaped death, I do not know of what sort, he set to work and succeeded in returning to France, April 28, 1870. He had chosen his date badly. He wrote to the Emperor: "We have much to talk about." I do not know that the father particularly desired this conversation, but in the meantime the son came to ask him to buy a house for him at Rueil, for the miserable pittance of 140,000 francs! He added, in charming

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confidence: "I think you will grant me this." His desires were not limited to this purchase. He hoped to enter the Tuileries. He added in a manner which he doubtless thought irresistible:

"Dear Father, I implore you. Restore me to myself. Fold me in your fatherly arms, let me at least have the joy of seeing you, of living beside you, like an honorable man. If you love me, as I love you, all coolness between us will pass away. I want you to forget the past, that people may say: 'He does his father honour, and bears his name worthily.'"

And without anything further he signed himself Louis Napoleon.

His father replied June 11, 1870, creating him Comte de Labenne, and taking his title from an estate in the Landes, gave him a fine coat of arms, in which, on a blue ground, eagles and black shells alternate, with a proud device: *Semper recte*. All this was buried among the waste paper in the Finance Department, where M. de Labenne was the receiver. He married March 12, 1879, the daughter of a banker,

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Mlle. Marie Henriette Paradis, born at Vaugirard, March 23, 1857. From this marriage were born, 1880, Georges Henry Louis, who died four years later, two years after his father, who died February 11, 1882, at No. 69, rue de Miromesnil. His body was taken to the chapel at Lancey, near Plourivo, in Brittany, on the way to Paimpol. And the stone, supported by two angels, bears the inscription :

Here reposes
Louis Comte de Labenne
deceased Feb. 11, 1882,
in his 38th year.

His widow was married the following year to M. Dupont, of Paimpol. In this way the name died out of the secret history of the second Empire.

Napoleon III., accompanied by the Empress, visited Ham in 1856, and did her the honour of his prison house of 1840. With a certain melancholy smile he showed her the ramparts behind which he had dreamed through those long weary hours, and the garden where the long thin flowers planted during his



ELEONORA VERGEOT, "LA BELLE SABOTIÈRE"

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captivity were wasting away, the room in which he had spent hours of solitary resignation. Did he tell her about Eléonora, who brought him her white beauty, her submissive and pleasant voluptuousness? What was she to the Emperor at this time if not a memory of far-off things fading away? Not far from the Tuileries at No. 21, Champs Elysées, she lived quietly and retired, in an apartment on the first floor, with five large windows looking out on to the green, paying a rent of 2,000 francs. She was happy, and why not? Was she not to be envied with her husband and his salary of 30,000 francs, 6,000 francs for office expenses, and 5,000 for lodging. The income was large enough for her who had eaten the black bread and the vegetable stews of Picardy in her youthful days, and had washed up dishes for the good people of Ham.

The life she lived was very retired, for bad tongues said: "Mme. Bure may have been La Belle Sabotière, but to-day she is not 'belle' and is still quite 'Sabotière.'" Spiteful talk, no doubt, for she wanted nothing that the world gives to those who beg

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the favour of its smiles. She lived alone, far from her sons, who were intoxicated with their origin, and the victims of their own ambition. Somewhere—at Rueil, in the time of the Second Empire—she had a daughter, who was married to Edouard Boussu, to whom the Emperor granted a pension of 1,600 francs, and whose rent of 1,000 francs he paid, wine at 600 francs, furniture, linen, a clock, and even more important presents to her: 3,000, 25,000, and 50,000 francs. Where was this daughter? What memories did these two women exchange—this daughter who depended upon the generosity of her mother's late lover?

After the fall of the Empire, Bure retired to No. 39, rue de Rome. For some years there is nothing to say about his life. He died January 17, 1882. His body was buried at Mont Parnasse. Eléonora left Paris for the suburbs. At Vesinet [No. 5, rue Auber] she brought her life, which desired nothing further, to a close. Was she poor? I do not know, but I do not think so. She died August 4, 1886. A low mass, a simple grave, that is all. And at Ham

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there is only the memory of the sacrifice of her youth and love, in the old fortress where she lived with no other ambition.

IV

TO COUNTERACT THE DULNESS OF EXILE

Establishment of the Prince, escaped from Ham, in London—His budget—Elegant life led by him—The train of the mistresses of an Adonis of forty—A mysterious Countess : Mme. d’Espel—Mme. C.—An adventure with la Taglioni—A lion, rival of Brummell—Count d’ Orsay—Curious past of this gentleman—Wellington’s praise—Liaison of d’ Orsay with Lady Blessington—The symbol in the coat of arms of the Count d’ Orsay—His friendship with the Prince—The ruined lion—The Prince-President comes to his assistance—The end of d’ Orsay—It was he who introduced Napoleon to Miss Howard.

To counteract the dulness of exile. Returning from America, whither the Government had shipped him after the affair of Strasburg, Louis Napoleon settled anew in Switzerland after the death of his mother. His proximity to the French frontier was not without danger to Louis Philippe. For a year, spent at



THE CASTLE OF HAM, PRISON OF PRINCE LOUIS NAPOLEON

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Arenenberg, he was like Napoleon had been on the rock of Elba, a perfect terror to the monarchy of July. The Swiss Diet was asked to expel him, refused to do so, and was threatened with invasion, a disaster which the Prince had the good sense to avoid by leaving the country of his own free will. He went to Dusseldorf, and on Tuesday, October 23, 1838, he went on board the steamship *Batavia* and set out for London. He stopped awhile at Fenton's Hotel, in St. James's Street. Then he went on successively to a hotel in Waterloo Place, to No. 3 King Street, to No. 17 Carlton House Terrace, in Pall Mall between St. James's Park and Regent Street, and finally to a house, No. 7, Carlton Gardens, belonging to the Marquess of Ripon. The decoration was sober and severe. The salon contained Canova's admirable bust of the Emperor, and he gathered together many pictures, and touching family souvenirs. The furniture must have been costly, because when the Prince left London in 1848, and it was sold by auction it fetched about £1,500. There it was that the preparations for the Coup d'Etat of Boulogne took

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place. When, May 25, 1846, the Prince escaped from Ham, he went immediately to London, and calling himself the Comte d'Arenenberg, he put up at the Brunswick Hotel, Jermyn Street, and only took possession of his residence two years later. One can judge fairly well of the life he led by a glance at his note-books. He pays 775 francs a month for food : 500 francs for clothes ; 625 francs for house-rent. He spends about 1,000 francs as pocket-money. The whole amounting to about 88,250 francs a year. Montholon goes still further and says that the cost of the Prince's household was from 600,000 to 700,000 francs a year. But these figures need not surprise us. The Prince had a position to keep up among the gentry and fashion of London, for was he not His Highness the Prince Napoleon Bonaparte ? He must have a certain French elegance. He must not pass unnoticed when he walked down Piccadilly from the Haymarket to Albemarle Street, that Piccadilly praised so delightfully by Frederic Locker.

“ Piccadilly ! Shops, palaces, bustle and breeze,
The whirling of wheels, and the murmur of trees . . . ”

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He learned from the English how to be calm and self-restrained with dignity. And when he returned to France in 1848 one could not help remarking that one could see at once that he had been in England. But for all that he had not eschewed pleasure. He gave himself up to it madly. He had to get the better of those six years' imprisonment, for Eléonora Vergeot would not count for much in his life, and henceforth his distractions were not always hidden ones, and the very fact of their publicity made his enemies very strong against his candidature for the Presidency in 1848. They were able to show how this "Adonis of forty" was to be found behind the scenes at circuses with a woman on his knees and a bottle of champagne in his hand, how the ballet girls of London quarrelled over his favours, how he spent his days in killing hired horses at Newmarket, and his nights in drink and in standing suppers to the houris of Drury Lane, and they were not likely to pass over his procession of mistresses, on which the London papers also commented. He had a wonderful collection from which to choose, for as early as 1831 Queen Hor-

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tense remarked at a luncheon given by the then Duchess of Bedford that she had never seen “so many pretty women.” And some of these pretty women were not inclined to look unfavourably on the Prince. Who was the lady named Favart de Langlade, that creole who lived at Kensington Gate, and who gave such excellent dinners, followed by whist, which he so often patronized? And who is that Comtesse d’Espel, d’Espeuille, Espelle or Despel, whom he knows so intimately, and who gives shelter to the men and horses collected for the Coup d’Etat of Boulogne? Was she Comtesse only, “*à la facon du prince*,” as they used to say? But it is certain that her nobility did not come from La Chesnay du Bois, nor from Clairembaut, nor from Hozier, to say nothing of Chérin. There are many things in the life of the Prince at this time which must remain dark, and it is of no use to try to throw light upon them. In the same way I can fit no name to the initial, Mme. C., who was denounced in 1840 in an unknown work in the following cruel terms :

An intriguing woman, still of that age which

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pleases boys, who in their depraved taste prefer a woman after her prime, who knows life, to a beautiful chaste girl who has no tricks. God only knows to what this woman has devoted her forty years! She calls herself twenty-five! Always in want to satisfy her fancies, she has set herself to deceive and betray Louis Napoleon, to exploit him, to live upon him. She sells him to England, who has already paid him out once or twice. She is here, there, and everywhere, but never far away from the unhappy man whose bad genius she is.

The problem is not one to be solved by curious seekers. Chance alone will some day give the answer to the riddle. But in the Prince's life everything is not so mysteriously romantic. Here, for instance, is an anecdote about Louis Napoleon and the famous dancer Taglioni. Coming from her it is rather surprising, because she was not a prude, and supped sometimes with Doctor Véron at the Maison Dorée:

There has been much amusement over a little adventure which happened to Prince Louis at the

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Théâtre Français de Saint James, where he found himself in a box opposite Mlle. Taglioni. Between the acts the Prince sent one of his aides-de-camp to tell the adorable dancer that he would be pleased to see her. Mlle. Taglioni replied that she would be pleased to receive M. Louis Bonaparte as a Frenchman. The negotiations came to nothing and the two powers kept their dignity throughout the entire performance.

Louis Napoleon had no grudge against her for the lesson. La Taglioni married, in 1832, Comte Gilbert des Voisins, who was kept successively, so Viel Castel says, by Mme. de Nicolai, Mme. Manuel and the Duchesse de Raguse. She left him in 1844. In 1844, when the Prince became President of the Republic, he made him Government Commissioner at the Théâtre Italien. This was exchange of wit in good coin.

Louis Napoleon was introduced into the gallant Society of London by d'Orsay, son of General d'Orsay and Eléonora de Franquemont, natural daughter of the Prince of Wurtemberg. Gédéon Gaspard Alfred

TO COUNTERACT THE DULNESS OF EXILE

de Grimaud, Comte d'Orsay, and of the Holy Roman Empire, was born in Paris, September 4, 1801. He was vain, ostentatious, clever and without a sou. His arms were two golden stars and a carp swimming in a river. The Duchesse de Grammont was his sister. He took Brummell's place in Society when Brummell committed social suicide. He had something about him which was very French, a certain ease of manner, and a kind of haughty pride. "He was the most accomplished gentleman and an ideal specimen of a Frenchman of the better class," said Lord Ruttwen. He seemed to fascinate everybody. Men were mad enough about him to wear medallions of him. He could have said with Ponsard :

"I did not dine that I might have gloves."

Gloves ! Sometimes he wore six pairs a day. Reindeer in the morning to drive to the hunt. At the hunt chamois leather. Beaver to drive his Tilbury back to London after a run down to Richmond. Kid gloves with coloured points to wear later on when he went to the Park or drove a lady to pay calls or to

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make purchases, with which to hand her out of the carriage. Dog-skin gloves for dining out; and in the evening for ball or party, white lamb-skin gloves. And the famous dandy did not lose his head over them! And Persigny, whom Viel Castel compares so spitefully with coffee and chicory, admiringly declared that "he held the sceptre of elegance and *bon ton* in the midst of the English aristocracy," and compared him to the Chevalier de Grammont, and there were many less like him than d'Orsay. This, then, was the lion who had ruled over London since 1821. He had filled Lady Blessington with what one has been pleased to call "an historic passion," and therefore we must say a few words about Lady Blessington. Margaret Power, the daughter of Edmond Power, and Ellen Sheehy, of Tipperary, was eleven years older than d'Orsay, and had married Maurice St. Leger Farmer, a drunken captain. When this gentleman was gathered to his fathers she had married Charles John Gardiner Baron Mountjoye and Earl of Blessington, an honest man, well provided with pounds sterling. D'Orsay who, it was known to



COUNT D'ORSAY

TO COUNTERACT THE DULNESS OF EXILE

every one, lived at the expense of the aristocracy and his English tradesman, scented out Lady Blessington as his prey. He succeeded so well that Lord Blessington made him his son-in-law and the executor of his will. Did I not say that he had a carp for his crest? Another aquatic vertebrate might have been added without much exaggeration.

D'Orsay took himself off to Italy, and the family with him, for some years, and then bringing them back to Paris, he set up Lady Blessington in a fine house which had belonged to Marshall Ney, in the rue de Lille. And there Blessington died of a fit of apoplexy, an elegant way of leaving a *ménage à trois* to the elegant dandy. The following year they returned to London, lived for a time at Seamore Place, in Mayfair, and then settled down at Gore House in South Kensington. Lady Blessington dallied with literature and d'Orsay tried his hand at sculpture. He portrayed the old Duke of Wellington, who said he was charmed. "At last I have been made to look a gentleman," said the hero of Waterloo with delight. And in truth D'Orsay was better able to

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deal with women than with statues. This was an excuse for Lady Blessington.

Louis Napoleon had made the acquaintance of d'Orsay between 1838 and 1840, before the Coup d'Etat of Boulogne. It was he who introduced Miss Howard to the Prince. That was an important service. And Louis Napoleon remembered this when he became President of the Republic. And although the dandy, always short of money, was suspected of having played the spy upon him, he generously came to his assistance in 1849, when d'Orsay, fearfully in debt, fled from London, and, crossing the Channel, settled in Paris. Lady Blessington soon followed him, and went to live in an hotel in the rue Ville-l'Evêque, and then in a small house in the rue du Cirque, where she committed suicide June 4, 1849. A pension of 24,000 francs came to d'Orsay's timely aid. The Prince did assist him, in spite of all that has been said to the contrary. In July, 1852, he was nominated Superintendent of the Fine Arts, a post without any work to do but with a salary of 25,000 francs. The dandy was sulky, he

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had hoped to be made Ambassador at least. His discontent was very short-lived, for he died August 4, 1852, from a disease of the spinal cord. But the gratitude of the Prince did not die with him. For he paid d'Orsay's debts in France. 30,484 francs. He knew how to acquit himself towards him to whom, in the midst of all the cares and worries of his English exile, he owed his acquaintance with his star, or better still his Egeria, and even better still his bank.

V

THE MYSTERIOUS LOVE-AFFAIR OF AN ENGLISH EGERIA

Where does Miss Howard come from—Her mysterious past—The revelation of her birth certificate—Supposed parents of Miss Howard—Her beginning in the life of gallantry—She is beautiful and makes conquests—Her salon—Her liaison with the Prince—Question of money—Singular combinations of a loan—Miss Howard in Paris—The small private hotel in the rue du Cirque—Her liaison with the Prince-President causes scandal—A curious pleading *pro domo sua*—Louis Napoleon and the women from 1848-1851—The orgies of the Elysée—Should Rachel be counted among the mistresses—The Imperial hopes of Miss Howard—Comedies round the marriage of Napoleon III.—The account of Miss Howard is settled—The dance of millions—Beauregard and his Comtesse—The husband and son of Miss Howard—Death of the Comtesse de Beauregard—The château after her disappearance—Money is the beginning and the end of the legend of Miss Howard.

WHENCE came this mysterious and enigmatical English woman, Miss Howard, who was to play such an important part in the life of Louis Napoleon? What

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was the obscure origin of this Empire builder, whose advances of funds assisted the re-establishment of the régime overthrown by the thunderbolt of Sedan? Napoleon III.'s friends and enemies alike agree that her condition was modest in the extreme, and her parents were low indeed. Nothing has been revealed about her in spite of attentive researches. It is generally thought that she was the daughter of a Thames boatman, or a waiter at an hotel, whose father had kept an inn. Silence reigns over everything that touches her parents and her youth. There are doubts even about her name—Harget or Haryet. She signs herself Elizabeth Aldeston in a deed, which was not her name, and calls herself the widow of Martin Haryett, which is obviously not the truth. That is all that is known about her, nothing more nor less. I have found a new document: the birth certificate of Miss Howard. This at once does away with any ambiguity, and we are able to prove her condition in life without mistake. The result is she was born at Preston, in the county of Sussex, October 23, 1823, of Henry and Elizabeth Herriott, and she was christened

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Elizabeth, and we are told that her father was a brewer. Her parents were living at Dover in 1865.

So that stupid story that turns the mistress of Louis Napoleon in a lady of noble family falls to the ground, as M. Georges Montorgueil calls her. In England the Howards, the real ones I mean, count the Dukes of Norfolk, the Earls of Carlisle, and the Lords of Effingham and Suffolk among their number. Philanthropy claims John Howard, 1726-1790, whose book on prisons is so celebrated. The Army claims Frederick Howard, Colonel of H.M. 10th Hussars, who was killed at Waterloo, and of whom Byron sang in the third canto of *Childe Harold*, 13th verse :—

There is a monument to this warrior in the church at Waterloo, which runs :—

To the Memory of
The Honorable Frederick Howard,
Major of the 10th Hussars, Killed at the Battle of Waterloo
His mutilated remains were removed from the field of Battle by
order of his affectionate father, Frederick Earl of Carlisle,
to be deposited in the family Mausoleum
at
Castle Howard.

This Tablet was directed to be placed in the chapel of Waterloo
by his brother officers.



BAPTISM Solemnized in the Parish of BRIGHTHELMSTON, in the County of SUSSEX.

in the Year One Thousand eight Hundred and twenty two

When Baptised.	Child's Christian Name.	Parents' Names.		Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
		Christian.	Surname.			
1822 Oct- 23 No. 2015	Elizabeth Daugh ^r of	Henry & Elizabeth	Herriott	Preston in this County	Brewer	H. J. Tayer Curate

I hereby certify the foregoing is a true Copy of an Entry in the Register Book of Baptisms of the Parish aforesaid, as witness my hand this

eighteenth day of November One Thousand Nine Hundred and eleven.



THE LOVE-AFFAIR OF ENGLISH EGERIA

The famous Cardinal Howard also belonged to this family. He was the glory of the English episcopacy and the honour of Oscott, from which school he passed into the Guards. And whatever the Princesse de Lieven may have to say on the matter, there is no room in this family for the daughter of the brewer who shone in the Haymarket among the fast women of the capital.

There is no doubt at all about the profession of Elizabeth Herriott, none whatever; she was what is termed a "gay woman," a *courtisane*, without any hesitation, and General Fleury was among her acquaintances. Libellers make her begin as an oyster girl, or barmaid in some low lodging house in Wapping. Louis Napoleon got to know her when making a tour of inspection in Wapping with Mme. Gordon, and her relations began with him by cheating him of his watch. A half-bred sailor named Sampaio was at that time her lover. She met a certain Jack Young FitzRoy, well known in gaming houses, and a very clever swindler, who found her well versed in the art of messalina.

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He made her his mistress, and when by a stroke of luck he won a bet of a thousand guineas, he bought her furniture and fine clothes, and horses and an elegant brougham, and sent her to pick up what she could in Hyde Park. She was a magnificent woman, about whom one might easily be deceived at first sight. A woman of exquisite proportions and classic beauty, of good features and elegant, she found it fairly easy to lure birds to her snare. Her worshippers were invited to her house, where they played for high stakes, and Young FitzRoy did wonders with the cards. These light-hearted revellers had good appetites. Lord Clebden, one of them, paid 25,000 francs for the lady's favour. What did she call herself then? Haryett or Herriott most likely. Her reasons for taking the name of Howard are very obscure, and, to tell the truth, very mysterious. She borrowed the name from a well-known steeplechase rider, whose mistress she was before her lot fell in with Francis Montjoye Martin, Major in the 2nd Life Guards. All is very complicated and the *Mysterious Memoirs of Miss Howard, Comtesse de Beauregard*,

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announced for publication in 1866, but which never appeared, would certainly have thrown no light on the situation. To judge by what really happened, Miss Howard made good use of her beauty and employed her interests in bettering her condition in life. In her rooms at 277, Oxford Street, or No. 9, Berkely Street, she was surrounded by high Society. The Duke of Beaufort, the Earl of Chesterfield, and the Earl of Malmesbury were among her regular visitors, and the well-known "dandies" from the clubs were not absent, and among these we find Comte d'Orsay, and this is the bond of union which attaches her to Louis Napoleon. The latter was in Society and still rich, in spite of the sums swallowed up by the Boulogne affair, and elegant and original in his gig, with a tiny groom. And was he not a Napoleon, and therefore fit ornament to any English drawing-room, even to the drawing-room of a demi-mondaine. Idle, and adoring pretty women, he was easily led, nothing else was required. The coarse tradition according to which he met Miss Howard in the street and went home with her, where

NAPOLEON III AND THE WOMEN HE LOVED

in return for his three shillings he was made happy, is quite absurd. And not less absurd is the story which shows him selling the last house he possessed for 200,000 francs, in order to buy Young FitzRoy's mistress. And the insult with which the pamphleteers of 1870 saluted him as "le Marfori de Miss Howard," is simply outrageous. The well of truth is often polluted. There remains still the question of money. It cannot be denied that she supplied the Prince, and we will look into the conditions of these loans. It seems certain that Louis Napoleon was introduced to her after the flight from Ham. It is not true that she supplied money for the Coup d'Etat of Boulogne; that the woman's dressing-case, and the reels of cotton and needles seized on board the steamer which took Louis Napoleon to Wimereux, were hers; that she visited him at Ham; that during his captivity she supplied him with the proceeds of her "commerce." These statements are all false and are denied by documents which are known to be true. But the fact of the loans is quite certain. They took place apparently in 1848.

THE LOVE-AFFAIR OF ENGLISH EGERIA

After the fall of the Government of Louis Philippe, on February 28, the Prince arrived in Paris and took up his quarters in the rue du Sentier with Vieillard, his old tutor, at Arenenberg. Asked by the Government to return to England, he went on board the "Lord Warden" and landed at Folkestone. It was only in the following June that he returned to Paris to begin his electoral campaign which was to carry him to the Chamber and thence to the Elysée. Naturally he wanted money. And he turned to Miss Howard. What sum did she advance? Eight millions of francs they have said again and again. And we may well ask where Miss Howard found this money. And the truth is easy to tell in this case. It was easy to save appearances by a financial operation. Miss Howard had some property near Civitta Vecchia, which she sold to Louis Napoleon on credit. On the deed he borrowed immediately from the Marchese E. L. Palavicino, 60,000 roman crowns, or 324,000 francs, a sum which he repaid in 1851. And this was the sum of money which made the election of the Emperor's nephew a certainty.

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He did not forsake his English mistress when he went to Paris. He put up at the Hotel du Rhin, Place Vendôme, and to avoid all the “yelping” and emotions of offended political prudery, he installed Miss Howard at the Hotel Meurice, in the Rue de Rivoli, then the English Hotel of Paris. He did not stay long at the hotel, because December 20 he went to the Elysée. He had taken a step towards his throne. Miss Howard followed him in the direction of the Faubourg St. Honoré, and he returned to “Albion’s daughter” the hospitality he had received from her in London. Indeed he rented for her a house, No. 14 rue du Cirque, which has since disappeared to make room for the Gardens of the Rothschild residence. The spot was well chosen, for the President of the Republic had only to pass a little door in the garden wall to find himself with his mistress. She stayed there with her younger sister, a very pretty, simple, young girl. It is Fleury, who often went to the house with others of the Prince’s friends, who gives us this description of her. Persigny, Mocquard Napoleon’s secretary,

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Edgar Ney his aide-de-camp, and Evans his dentist, were among the visitors, and the evenings there were charming. Tea or coffee was served while the guests talked of the affairs of the day, and listened to the music with which the hostess delighted her guests. The Prince smoked the cigarettes, of which his pockets were always well supplied, and his little black dog snored on the ground at his feet. He was able to escape for a time from the worries of his new dignities, and it almost seemed as if he had found "the little wife" his mother had desired for him when she scarcely dared to dream of such a fortune for him. This was the last occasion he had in which to indulge his taste for family life until the moment of his last exile to England in 1871. At the beginning the Prince and Miss Howard had been discretion itself. They said in the Clubs that he had returned bringing with him the finest woman and the finest horse in the world, but the affair was treated as of no consequence. But it must have been doubly sad for her to be so near glory and not to be able to experience any of its pleasures.

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She could not put up with this for long, and in 1849 she was seen at the reviews when the Prince was present, and her carriage, with a horse painted on the panels, did not pass unnoticed. Louis Napoleon deputed Mocquard, his friend and secretary, to be Miss Howard's chaperon. He accepted the post of eunuch and took charge of his master's mistress. He accompanied her to the races, and placed her between his wife and daughter at the theatre. Viel Castel rails against Mocquard. Sometimes, however, she went unattended, as on the evening of October 28, 1852, when Louis Napoleon was at the opera with Abd-el-Kader at his side. Miss Howard and her diamonds caused remark. "It made a very bad effect," and on occasion people objected to Miss Howard's presence and complained of it. An incident of this kind occurred at Tours. The Prince had taken his mistress with him as usual, and she stayed in the house of General André, who, with his family, had gone to the Pyrenées—and it was a bad spot to choose, for the André family were Puritans and Protestants, and very severe in the matter of

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morals. When General André heard that his family sanctuary had been violated and profaned by the “prostitute,” he complained bitterly to Odillon Barrot, the Minister—“Have we then returned to those times when a King’s mistresses promenade their vices throughout the length and breadth of France?” No, but it would have been much better to have stayed in the rue du Cirque. Odillon Barrot was very embarrassed by this outspoken Philippic, and he did not wish to make a State affair of it; but, on the other hand, “I was not sorry,” said he, “that the President should feel that in the position to which he had been raised, he could no longer carry on the free life to which he had been accustomed in London.” After talking to his brother, therefore, who was the Secretary-General of the Presidency, he arranged to leave the letter where it might catch the Prince’s eyes, as if by chance. The stratagem succeeded splendidly, and Odillon Barrot received a letter from the Prince which we will produce here, because it is a little lecture on morals with special reference to puritans, and it is amusing, as it was delivered in connection with the

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subject of Miss Howard, and it really ought to be reprinted.

“ *Your brother has shown me M. André’s letter, to which I should not have replied, had it not contained false statements, which must be contradicted. A lady, in whom I take the most lively interest—accompanied by one of her friends and two persons of my household—desired to see the *carrousel* of Saumur; from thence she went to Tours; and being afraid of not finding rooms, wrote to me to find some for her. When I arrived at Tours, I told a Councillor of the Prefecture that I should be much obliged if he would find rooms for Comte Baciocchi and the ladies of his acquaintance. Chance and a bad star led them, it appears to M. André’s house, where, I know not why, it was thought that one of the ladies was called Baciocchi. She never took this name; if a mistake has been made it was made by strangers, independently alike of me and the lady in question. Now I want to know why M. André, without taking the trouble to find out the truth, holds me responsible alike for the use made of his house and of the wrong*

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name used. The proprietor, whose first care is to scrutinize the past lives of those he receives, makes a poor use of hospitality. How many women, much less pure and devoted and excusable than she who lodged at M. André's house, would have been received with all possible honour by that same M. André, because they used *their husbands' names to hide their guilty liaisons!* I detest that pedantic severity which always half hides : a cold, unfeeling mind, indulgent towards itself but inexorable towards others. True religion is never intolerant, and does not go about trying to stir up storms in a glass of water, to make a scandal about nothing, and turn a simple accident or an excusable oversight into a crime.

“ M. André, said to be a puritan, has not yet sufficiently meditated on that passage of the Gospel in which Jesus Christ, addressing himself to minds as wanting in charity as M. André's, says about the woman they wished to stone : ‘ Let him, etc.’ Let him practise this moral. As for my part I accuse nobody, and own that I am capable of seeking the affection my heart requires, even in unlawful relations.

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'And as up to the present my position has hindered my marriage; and as in the midst of the cares of government I have alas! in my own country, from which I have been absent so long, neither intimate friends, nor any ties of childhood, nor relations to give me family affections, I think I may be excused, if I have an affection which does harm to none and which I myself do not seek to parade. To return to M. André, if he really thinks, as he says he does, that his house has been soiled by the presence of a woman who is not married, I pray you tell him from me, that for my part I sincerely regret that a person of such pure devotion and high character should have happened by *chance to visit a house where the ostentation of bombastic virtue without any christian spirit reigns under the mask of religion. You may make what use of my letter you please.*'

I find the pleading strong and the lesson sharp. I understand that Odillon Barrot refused to show it to M. André. I understand why, and regret it.

Now is it quite true that the Prince's love for Miss

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Howard was so strong? Were there no treacheries to this respect and affection? Was her watching, was her jealousy unavailing? She had in truth good and excellent reasons for this, and I understand that the Englishwoman was touchy only on the matter of love, as for feminine political enthusiasms neither she nor her sister would have sufficed to overcome them. It is amusing to observe, from 1848 to 1852, the touching admiration women had towards Louis Napoleon. Mme. Ametiger, called Mother Napoleon, an old canteen woman, died of joy on hearing that the Seine, the Moselle, the Yonne, and Charente Inférieure, as well as Corsica, had elected him. At the time of the elections of 1848, at the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines and the rue de la Paix, stood a young woman, "pretty and dressed with a certain coquetry," she had two wooden legs and sold bad prints and songs "which she played with much taste on the violin." The Prince passing one day gave her some money, and she begged him to allow her to speak a few words with him. "Sir," she said, "they tell me that you are much embarrassed just now. I have three 1,000

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franc notes at home, lying idle. Will you let me offer them to you? When you are Emperor you will return them." And the Prince refused. Miss Howard was his refuge for the time being. But he remembered the invalid and her offer, and when he gained the throne he offered her a small allowance. "Tell the Emperor," she said, "that it is very kind of him to remember me. If he had taken my money, I might have taken his, but no, not now!" It is true that in spite of her two wooden legs she had two houses in the Avenue de l'Opera, and was able to give her daughter a large marriage portion. The instance is curious, but not unique, and in turning over the story of the Prince-President's different journeys many such may be found. "Everywhere he goes, women wave their handkerchiefs and throw flowers before him." His carriage was filled with flowers at Sens. And at Nancy, where he went to open the Strasbourg railway, a ball was given in his honour in one of the halls of the Museum. There was a great crowd and he was elbowed about a good deal. An enormous woman, wearing a straw hat and an old barège dress,

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and buttoned boots ” (which, according to Baronne Montet, seemed to be the height of incorrection) pressed close to him and stared at him so boldly that he turned away disgusted. His admirer was not repulsed, but kissing the tail of his coat exclaimed joyfully, “ There! I touched him! ” And I ask what could Miss Howard do against creatures like this woman, anxious not to hide their feelings? Nothing. Let her be jealous and storm as she may. That is her part in the play, and that is all. The Prince was evidently not thinking of inviting her to his “ extra ” pleasures, which the pamphleteers of the period call, the “ Orgies of the Elysée.” Ah, they cry aloud, these terrible avengers. “ Let our voices re-echo through the palace and pursue and disturb the triumphs of orgy.” And what clamorous cries against the “ circus squire ” and the “ fast man.” And offended modesty denounced his life of debauchery! And the “ obscene reveller ” who, jesting with women on every step of the social ladder, spent “ prodigious sums ” in his orgies and giving some woman every night the honour of his company.

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Among these voices from the lower depths thunders the voice of Victor Hugo in exile. “ He wants horses and women, and wishes to be called ‘ Monseigneur,’ and lead a ‘ gay life.’ ” It lends itself also to rhyme.

Marquises actrices, coquettes,
Et vierges du quartier Breda,
Que pour varier mes conquêtes,
Fleury met sur son agenda
Parcourons la gamme du vice,
Du salon jusqu’ à la coulisse,
De la coulisse au boulevard;
De mon boudoir que les bougies,
S’ allument donc pour les orgies,
Où présidera Miss Howard.

This is the usual joke of comic songs! And the Prince had no intention of offering his mistress anything of the kind. “ He was absolutely free and took advantage of his liberty,” says a chronicler looking back to that period. But his liberty could only be relative, with the jealous Miss Howard always at his side. However, Louis Napoleon kept his liberty at the Elysée parties, from which Miss Howard was rigorously excluded. A paper of the period tells us

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how the women of those parties exclaimed, at the arrival of Louis Napoleon, "How handsome he is!" and how he flitted from one to another, kind and attentive to each. And the number was so great that the President told Princesse de L. that "my rooms are too small for my beautiful visitors!" They are not so numerous at his suppers, at which, no matter how splendid they may be, he does not drink, whatever the libels of his fuddled companions, opera dancer or princesse, preferring to toast his guests with his conversational powers. Prudhon says, in one of his notes to the History of Napoleon III., "Numerous details on the Elysée orgies." I will not here repeat the long and obscene list, such coarsely dull sketches defile those who invented them. They say that many actresses were among the passing mistresses of this time—that they were vulgar. A certain Mme. P., whom I cannot identify, was among them; Alice Ozy, who was almost received at the Elysée publicly; Melle B., of the Variétés, to whom they say he gave 10,000 francs, and whose story, even were it glossed over, is too filthy to be repeated here. Others, C.M.,

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M.C., M.B.; Mlle. Théric, of the Comédie Française, who after a night at Saint Cloud took home a tobacco license for her father; Madeleine Brohan, who declined the Prince's honours; and Rachel, the great tragedian, whom Louis Napoleon had seen for the first time in London, July, 1845. Returning to Paris, did he wish to express his admiration and enthusiasm in person? To decide on this question we have only Arsène Houssaye's note, dated 1848. "Arrived at the Elysée I was introduced into a salon, then into another, and again into a third—where all in smiles Mlle. Rachel came to meet me. She seemed quite at home here. But was she not at home everywhere? Anyhow she was at that time the *mistress* of the house." That will suffice to elucidate the verses in *L'Empereur s'amuse* in Victor Hugo's "*Les châti-ments*:—

Prince, préside aux jeux folâtres
Chasse aux femmes dans les théâtres!

There were many others beside. On August 15, at a ball at Saint Cloud, Louis Napoleon was seen

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to touch the pretty Marquise de Belboeuf, who seemed neither surprised nor affected by this action. But perhaps she was accustomed to this? About this period dates the *liaison* with Lady Douglas, daughter of the Grand Duchesse Stephanie of Baden, and it was said that she was the most voluptuous German ever seen. Petty passions, after all, each reigned, but none governed. That part was reserved for the young Spanish girl who about this time made her début into Society not far from that Hotel du Rhin, where some years before the Prince had put up.

January 21, 1846, entering on his last year of captivity, Louis Napoleon wrote to Mme. Cornu: "I shall leave Ham only to go to the Tuileries or to the Cemetery." And now he was in the Tuileries, whither the French people had called him, December 2, 1852, to the throne of his uncle. What was going to be his attitude towards Miss Howard? Did the English woman think for one moment that she was going to be the Empress, that she would reign in those Tuileries which she visited room by

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room with the future Emperor the day after the Coup d'Etat? According to Fleury, who knew her well, there was no doubt that she thought so. When the restoration of the Empire was an accepted thing, Miss Howard showed herself in different colours. She was a woman of great ambitions, with strong ideas about her rights in the past and a firm intention of pressing them in the future. When she heard a rumour of the Emperor's approaching marriage, she replied confidently that she would know how to prevent it. And up to that time their relations remained the same. The Prince submitted tamely to her yoke. "He was too kind to break off without having a very strong reason." And the brewer's daughter was not like Atalide, who sighs in Bérénice "*I love my lover enough to renounce his love.*" Meanwhile he intended to get married. How did he break with the lady? If we believe Comtesse de Tascher de la Pagerie, the greatest calm reigned over the whole affair. "When Miss Howard was told," she says, "of the probable marriage of her Imperial lover, she broke off with him and went away, saying she

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would have forgiven him had it been a princesse.” That sounds rather like Racine, from the daughter of an English brewer. It is more likely that the affair was arranged with a little cunning, some surprise and perhaps violence. The stratagem has already been told. When the situation became critical Miss Howard and Mocquard went to London to buy from Young FitzRoy some letters which compromised the Emperor. This man had followed the Prince and the English woman to Paris, and profiting by the situation he had made very many discreet demands for money.

I do not guarantee the truth of the story of this hush money, knowing its origin, but I do say that it is very probable. Wearied at length the President ordered Young FitzRoy to leave France in 1849. This is yet to be verified. According to another version, Miss Howard was staying at Havre, in the Hotel Frascati, when she learned of the marriage from the *Moniteur*. She, in a state of great anger and jealousy, immediately ordered an engine to be got ready to take her back to Paris, when, on her arrival

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in the rue du Cirque, she found a very unexpected sight. Her furniture had been broken, her drawers emptied, her money stolen, and her clothes scattered about and her papers taken. This was done by order of the "spies" of the "Assassin of the second of December." It was enough to kill her on the spot. And giving vent to her indignation, she fainted away. I repeat this dramatic story because it is curious, but I do not vouch for it. However, according to a police report of March 28, 1853, Miss Howard seems to have faced the affair very philosophically. "He always was capricious," she is supposed to have said, speaking of the newly married Emperor, "but he is subject to indigestion, and I know he will come back to me." And Viel Castel corroborates this: "She is expecting the return of her interrupted honeymoon." Is it possible to destroy these statements? Then we must deny the assertion of him who says that "the Emperor, through M. Mocquard, holds out hope to his former favorite!" And we are inclined to believe him, when in a police report of July 2, 1853, five months after the marriage of Napoleon III., we read

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“that Louis Napoleon has resumed his relations with Miss Howard.” Whence these deductions? From the fact that when the rejected woman met her former lover in the Bois, he bowed to her? Slight proof! The taking off of one’s hat in politeness does not imply the taking up of the old life. But it is difficult to make spies and idlers understand! Having settled his love affairs, the Emperor turned to settle the business interests of his former mistress. I have already shown how he became her debtor. If the origin of the debt is enveloped in darkness, and it is hard to find any details of it, the payment of the debt is quite open. There are very clear documents about it, although all the Emperor’s accounts are not forthcoming. He began, if we believe the rumour circulated in Paris, by paying her an income of 200,000 francs. Viel Castel was indignant, “I exclaim it is a lie, no one pays a retired mistress such a sum as that!”

But in truth, as we shall see, the Emperor paid much more. Meanwhile he was satisfied in paying instalments of 150,000 francs and 300,000 down. There is

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a small entry in *Le Siècle*, signed Louis Jourdan, against whom the Public Prosecutor brought proceedings :—

In the midst of the confusion into which the National representatives are thrown by the approach of the vacation, people are taking a lively interest in the nominations of members for the permanent committee and the new follies which may be attempted during the absence of the legislative power, by the madcaps of the Elysée. Quiet men who are devoted to the fortune of M. Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, and at the head of these we place M. Abatucci, show signs of considerable restlessness. In the centre of such a group, one of the members was heard speaking of the want of money which was making itself felt at the Elysée, a want so imperious that it might cause revolutions. An English lady who was very intimate with the inmate of the Elysée for a long time has suffered such a severe loss on the Exchange, that she has turned to her distant country to escape from them. Her losses amounted to 300,000 francs, which had to be paid at once, like all gambling debts. Everyone

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has shown great devotion on this occasion, and by what they say, honour is saved.

This incident goes back to the time of the Presidency. The finances of the Second Empire were not in a condition to stand another similar shock. On March 28, 1853, the police noticed a report which was spreading that land was going to be given to Miss Howard with the title of Princesse. The Emperor had done better still, and in a few days the following receipt was locked up with his papers:—

I hereby acknowledge that I have received from His Majesty the Emperor Napoleon III. the sum of 1,000,000 francs, in entire and complete discharge of all my rights and interests in the property of Civit  Novia, in the March of Ancona (Papal States).

E. H. de Beauregard.

Paris, March 25, 1853.

Beauregard and *de* Beauregard? Yes, she was now noble, and rich with the title of Comtesse, and a large estate. On the 13th of the preceding September

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she had bought for 575,000 francs, near Versailles, in Seine et Oise, that property to which she was about to add new glories. Beauregard is a château from the windows of which is a lovely view over gentle, undulating hills, lawns and charming copses, with groups of fine trees and small lakes, framed as it were by shrubs. The property consists of 186 hectares of fine land planted with fine old chestnut trees, and includes glass houses, five lodges for keepers and porters, a farm at Béchevet, and a stud at Bélebat, and numerous rabbit warrens. The château dates from the 18th century, but before it was built Lulli and Quinault, who perhaps wrote *Armide* and *Amadis de Gaule* on the spot, and other well known men had often been visitors. One day Louis XV. was attracted thither by the pleasures of hunting, and his horse, running away with him, carried him through the Salon after a ten-tined stag. Later on the property fell into the hands of shop-keepers and small people of that kind, among whom was a certain Boigne, son of a man who in his lifetime had been a furrier, who had made a fortune in India and in

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trade of which the less said the better, as there are others more noble. From his travels he brought back "the most disobliging character God ever made," and he it was who married that Mlle. Osmond, who as Mme. de Boigne became famous for her memoirs. In the time of the First Empire, Mme. Récamier Metternich, Nessebrode and others frequented Beauregard, and Napoleon, with his well known admiration for family seats, spoke of it as a "fine place." And one day it happened that M. de Boigne was no longer satisfied with it, and exchanged it for the manor of Châtenay, which belonged to Prince François Borghèse Aldobrandini, with a payment of 280,000 francs, November 14, 1812. For eight years the Aldobrandini kept Beauregard, which passed, July 25, 1820, for 300,000 francs, to Anisson Dupéron, manager of the Royal Press, who again exchanged it August 2, 1827, with the Marquis de Lamberville, for the Saint Aubin property near Yvetôt. Then the property passed into the hands of the Baron de Guenifey for 375,000 francs, who gave it over to Miss Howard, September 13. We have already said that

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the sum paid was 575,000 francs. The Englishwoman also bought the Bécheret Farm for 530,000 francs, the Bélbat Stud for 345,000 francs, other parts for 80,000 francs, making a total of 1,530,000 francs, to which sum we must add 800,000 francs, the cost of reconstruction, including the building of a wall round the property, which brings the total to a sum of 2,330,000 francs. It can be imagined that the daughter of the Preston brewer had not arrived at the position of *Châtelaine* simply by her economies. The million given March 25, 1853, did not suffice; and many others followed. Up to the end of 1854 Napoleon III. had given her five and a half. This is not based upon the calculation made by the pamphleteers, but the above figures are given by the Emperor himself. This memorandum was found among his personal papers at the Tuileries in 1870. And the figures are eloquent; they fix the price to the gratitude of the Conspirator of 1848.

January 1, 1855. Payment of 58,000 francs. The payments for the month of November are not included.

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I promised three millions and the cost of putting Beauregard into order, which I reckoned to be at the most 500,000 francs.

I gave

1,000,000 March 24, 1853, according to the receipt.

1,500,000 January 31, 1854.

1,414,000 in State funds.

585,000 in payments of 58,000 a month, starting
from January 1, 1855.

950,000 in payments of 50,000, starting from
January 1, 1853, up to January 1,
1855.

5,449,000 francs.

A pretty sum! Mocquard, the Emperor's Secretary, was the intermediary in this business, and all payments were made by him. Miss Howard was surrounded with clever (tricky) advisers, among whom was a friend of Mocquard's, the Marquis de Rouville, familiar with the Pereires and the Foulds, a man

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mixed up in many underhand jobs. And she understood how to watch her own interests and to call those who had charge of them to attention in a French which is at least peculiar.

Here is one of her letters to Mocquard, which goes to prove that she was a very keen, cautious woman, mixing up sentimentality with money matters in a marvellous manner.

“Château de Beauregard,

“July 24, 1853.

“My very dear Friend,

“To-day is the 24th, and it is with pain that I see that the arrangements made with me have not been carried out. I thought and do still think this to be a mistake. Why make me suffer? If things must go on like this I should have done better to keep the six millions instead of the 3,100,000 francs which were to have been paid on my demand at the end of 1853, and that is why I asked the Emperor to destroy the first amount (2,500,000 francs). My heart bleeds at having to write this, and if my marriage contract had

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not been drawn up as it is, and if I had no child, I should not take this step which has become my duty. I count on you to put an end to my suffering. The Emperor has too good a heart to leave a woman whom he loved so tenderly in such a false position—you know my position and you are my guardian, and it is because of that double fact that I write to you. I made a mistake in writing to the Emperor the other day; he says in a letter dated May, ‘I will give Gile to-morrow a cheque for the 3,500,000 francs.’ There is nothing to do but to reckon the income from June 1, 1853, on 500,000 francs, and from January to October 50,000 francs. I pray to God that there may be no further question of money between him and me, but quite a different sentiment in my heart. I love you tenderly.

“Your affectionate,

“E. H. DE BEAUREGARD.”

“I pray you do not leave this letter about. You may read it to His Majesty if you think fit, and then burn it immediately. I saw Madame Mocquard

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on Monday at four o'clock. She was very ill the other day."

Let us be grateful to the memory of Mocquard that he kept the letter. It tells us, that amid all this juggling with millions, she married, and her end was honorable. And, in truth, if the marriage contract was drawn up in 1853, the lawful marriage had not then taken place, because it dates only from May 16, 1854, and was in Florence. I point this out as an anomaly which I am unable to explain. The Englishwoman married an Englishman, an officer with a commission in the Austrian Hussars, Clarence Trelawney, of Trelawney, in Cheshire, of an old Cornish family. A police report of April 1, 1853, says: "It is reported that she is going to marry an Englishman, and that the Emperor will settle a handsome sum upon her." And we saw how she defended this sum tooth and nail. Trelawney did not enjoy it for long. Miss Howard left him, and, according to Griscelli, retired to Florence, where "she built a splendid palace on the banks of the Arno." I do not believe it, for she

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hardly left Beauregard from 1852 to 1865. But it is true that she divorced her husband just before her death in February, 1865. Perhaps the soldier had scruples. There still remains the question of children. She acknowledged that she had a son in 1853. Her letter to Mocquard leaves no doubt on the subject. A police report of March 11, says: "They are talking about Miss Howard's interesting condition. This news must have been given by the servant who looks after the Englishwoman's cat." Let us throw some light by means of another police report of March 18 on Miss Howard's cat: "She has an Angora cat which breaks the crockery and wears green ribbons on its tail. This cat has a servant: the servant wears green livery. The cat and the servant are both tokens of affection from the absent who is regretted." To return to the son—there was at that time a tradition that Louis Napoleon had several sons by the brewer's daughter. "Louis Napoleon has given Miss Howard three children." This is from a pamphlet. And Odillon Barrot said "that the Englishwoman had had several children by the Prince-President." This

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phrase must be reduced to the singular once and for all. And was Louis Napoleon the father of that one—and ought he to have acknowledged his paternity? A single date will give the answer. Miss Howard's son, Martin Constantin, was born in London August 16, 1842. Now at this date Louis Napoleon had been shut up at Ham for twenty-three months. No opinion, Gallifet's or another's, can carry any weight against this statement. I will remark in passing that Miss Howard's son was called Martin. And as we saw some time back, Major Francis Mountjoye Martin had been Miss Howard's lover. Colonel in 1858, retired in 1863, he died January 24, 1874, in London. The name is no proof, scarcely a supposition, but it may be called in to help to disentangle a story of which the actors have done their best to destroy all traces, which could bring to light anything which might give the clue to the riddle of their lives.

Martin Constantin Howard was twenty-three in 1865, and on the 25th of January of this year Napoleon III. created him Comte de Béchevet, the name of the farm on the Beauregard estate. Two

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years later he married, at Posen, January 26, 1867, Marie Anne Josephine Caroline de Csuz, of Csuz Pastza Szent Mihaly, born at the Castle of Csuz, near Comorn, in Hungary, in 1847. At the end of the Second Empire "she was known as the prettiest blonde in high Parisian Society," and passed for General Gallifet's mistress. Two daughters and a son were born of this marriage. The Comte de Béchevet was attached for some time to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and died August 24, 1907. He was laid to rest in the little cemetery at Chenay, in the country church in which, forty-two years before, his mother's body had received absolution. She had been buried there August 23, 1865. She had lived at Beauregard for twelve years, under a name dead to the echo of scandal; she was still very beautiful, in spite of a certain embonpoint, and often recalled the times gone by, when the future held out luring promises, and gave generous alms to pay for the sins of her past life. Her hair was growing grey, she was a little over forty years, and as she walked about the beautiful grounds of her estate, and along the clipped

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hedges of her French garden, the past must have seemed to her very hard and the present not entirely without its bitterness. Of course her success had been great, for did not the fast woman of the Haymarket and the prostitute of Hyde Park now handle millions? But had she realised her desire? Was there not a time in her life when she almost felt herself at the summit of power? In that country of France, in which she was a stranger, and in that Society in which she was an intruder, she knew enough history to know what power women like Du Barry and La Pompadour had wielded. Was she not justified in fancying herself in this *rôle* of favourite mistress? Had she not shared the long dark days of exile, and had she not heard the murmurings of the growing hostility? And money? Had she not supplied the funds which fought the battle and won the famous victory? And now another had come—also a foreigner—who had only to smile and take the prize. This was almost enough to make her despair of human justice. She did not turn against divine justice, for was she not the repentant Magdalen now

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enriched with assured income. She turned towards the pomp of Catholicism, which awoke in her such ardent faith that she forsook the austere tenets of the Protestant religion in which she had been brought up. And the Curé of Chesnay, near Versailles, often visited her, and he often spoke to her as they wandered about the park of the refuge always open to souls wounded in the battles of this world. And she being already ill and weakened by solitude, gave way. Death took her suddenly. Around her there was bewilderment. Madame la Comtesse was dying, Madame la Comtesse was already dead! Baptised and conquered by the Church, won over to a new God, the brewer's daughter had abjured Protestantism. Catholic prayers were said over her coffin, which was placed on a steamboat and taken to England, where she was gathered to her fathers. There remained only the fine Château in which she had died, in the Empire of France, and the dry entry which registers her death.

The 19th August, 1865, there died at the Château de Beauregard, in the Commune of Celle Saint

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Cloud, Elizabeth Anne Haryett, the proprietor, forty-one years old, born in England, wife of Clarence Trelawney.

The news of this sudden death, which caused no excitement at the time—like the circle made by a pebble thrown in the river, grows larger and larger—made a good theme for the exaggerations of the pamphleteers. It almost seems as if the mistress of an Emperor has no right to die a natural death, but that the right to make up the most astonishing stories still exist. For instance :—

Some days after having been seen at the Théâtre des Italiens, covered with diamonds, where sitting in a box she amused herself by watching her who had robbed her of her lover, Miss Howard suddenly disappeared. This extraordinary disappearance was not arranged by the police, therefore nothing need be said about the extraordinary stories which were circulated about it. I am inclined to believe the version which says that Miss Howard was strangled. Several circumstances strengthen my faith in this. I hope that one day the veil which hides this odious deed will be rent asunder.

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The veil, let us confess, was well patched. In 1865 Beauregard went to Miss Howard's son. He remained in possession of it for five years, when he was obliged, by pressing need of money, to get rid of it. January 25, 1870, he sold the estate for the sum of 784,000 francs to Mme. Adelaide Louise Adrienne Leroux, the daughter of a stockbroker, who had married, in 1849, the Duc de Beaufremont, from whom she was separated in 1851. When the war broke out the Château remained unoccupied. The Germans took possession of it in 1870, and the tread of Prussian soldiers sounded through the rooms in which the fainting phantom of the English Egeria sighed. Mme. de Beaufremont was ruined and never had occasion to inhabit the Château, which was seized in February, 1872, and the contents were sold at the Hôtel Drouot. The creditors tried in vain to dispose of the land, May 2, by public sale. The reserve price was first fixed at 1,200,000 francs. In June, 1872, it was reduced to 850,000 francs, and fell to Baron Maurice de Hirsch, on whose death it passed to Baron Desforêts.

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The history of Miss Howard begins and ends in a question of money. In looking over lawyers' books, and bundles of dusty papers, one comes unexpectedly upon her name, clear and distinct, again and again.

BOOK THE SECOND

THE MISTRESSES OF THE EMPEROR

I

THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON III. AS A LOVER

The Prince makes room for the Emperor—Sentiments of the ladies on his behalf—His politeness—Confusion created by the robes of a prelate—The Emperor loves to mystify the curious—He loves pleasure—His gallant life after his marriage—He is easily seduced—He is generous—Question of money—His inconstancy—Facilities procured to him by his surroundings—Comte Baciocchi, Superintendant of the Imperial menus—Plaisirs—Baciocchi, vain, subtle and discreet—M. Hyrvoix, chief of the secret police—The political part of this policeman—Spy—The mistress of M. Hyrvoix and the secret of her correspondence—Disgrace of the policeman—The gallant life of Napoleon III. and public opinion.

LOUIS NAPOLEON has now done with the romance of conspiracy, he has become the middle-aged Emperor, whose youth is well behind him. He is no longer

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attractive in the same way. The pensive melancholy of his exile and captivity, and the sad and bitter charm of misfortune are no longer available. He is a sovereign, "the most remarkable man of his time," as a woman said of him, and he has only to ask and have. He has all the dazzling advantages of his position, and of these he intends to make good use. It is more difficult from this time onward to say exactly what sort of feeling he excited in women. Are they attracted by the man or by the Emperor? Psychology has not yet worked out the answer. To give one example among ten. A Belgian woman, E. de Noordbeck, becomes a police spy and hands over a list of subscribers to the Anti-Bonapartist papers published in Belgium, a small service for which she asks the Emperor to grant her a favour, and adds: "While professing a profound admiration for your august person, before I had the honour to be admitted into your presence, I own that this admiration is changed into a kind of worship and adoration, and I can only affirm that if you were to let yourself be known intimately and understood, no one in the world, not

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even your enemies, would be able to resist the charm and sweetness which emanates from your entire being.” How is it possible, in cases like these, to discover the reasons for the declaration! Love or self-interest? Either or both, all is possible. Does he, or does he not, encourage these sentiments in any way? We must look and see how he behaves towards women. In the first place, he is always polite. He stands aside to let the waiting women pass him when by chance he meets any on the staircase of the Tuileries; more, he bows to them. And in public his manners are more easy in the company of women. He no longer gives way to melancholy. He is still very gentle, but more quick, more audacious, and goes straight to the point without losing his time over trifles. “The Emperor accepts neither hindrance nor refusal in his pleasure; each fancy must be satisfied,” was said about him in the *Mémoires Apocryphes*. That remark seems to carry the stamp of precise observation, but is really a miscalculation. One day the Emperor, passing through a darkened room, fancied he saw on a sofa a leg against which clung a skirt.

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“He became bold and took certain liberties.” The object of this gallant attempt spoke and was recognised as His Eminence the Bishop of Nancy, who had fallen asleep on a sofa in some shady corner. Ah! if the pamphleteers had got wind of this anecdote! They would not have stopped at calling Napoleon III. “the libidinous Cæsar of the Barracks of Paris.” But it is the occasion that makes the thief, and he did his utmost to make occasions. When at Compiègne he took much pleasure in talking to women, preferring their conversation to any other distractions. “He went,” said a contemporary of his, “from one to another, talking to each in turn and giving others the opportunity of joining in the conversation by asking questions of any within reach of his eye or voice.” And, again, a little touch of nature to give the finish to this sketch of intimate court life: “Nothing is more amusing than to see how the coquettes manœuvre to get his attention. I have seen some change places ten times in five minutes, and follow him with their eyes for an hour together, to get a word with him.” But frequently

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all was in vain. And if it was said of the Emperor that he certainly liked women, it could also be said that he excelled in discovering them. At those balls where he waltzed, and he waltzed well, his eye lighted immediately upon that *rara avis*. The person with whom he was talking found himself suddenly left in the "lurch," no matter how high his station, if a pretty woman passing by attracted His Majesty's attention. As he was aware that people knew this habit of his, and followed his observing eye, he was often pleased to mystify his observers. At certain Court functions, he often spied a heroine among unknown beauties. But as he understood the resources of irony, "he sometimes misled his courtiers, as for example that evening when he kept his glasses turned on to the wife of a neighbouring Mayor, a woman with a pimply face, and the tip of whose nose was ornamented with a hairy wart." I do not fancy this was the occasion on which he remarked, "I have encouraged an obscene theatre." This note goes to show that it is wrong to say that the Emperor, far from being dissolute, was perhaps rather a senti-

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mentalist. The taste for passing pleasure, the flower plucked and thrown away, seem to be characteristic of the psychology of his love, and the enormous number of his temporary mistresses is the proof of this. He divides his life into two parts, part of life he spends with them and the other he gives up entirely to the affairs of State.

Marriage did not matter much. His old habits, the morality of his surroundings and his taste took the upper hand. He was always a great voluptuary, and it was very easy to lead him. The most fascinating women met him half-way with an immodesty scarcely veiled with a show of delicacy. And he surrendered very willingly. It cost him but little and it gave them so much pleasure. Any woman provided with some attraction could pride herself on knowing him intimately. And I dare say he did not often refuse to gratify their pride. And Viel Castel comments severely on the consequences of the liberality of the Emperor, whose civil list was twenty-seven millions, and who instinctively despised money. He could "not count," and it was

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a prodigious sum that he paid these women. "What need was there to count?" The only charm money had for him was the knowledge that he could give it away. And be thanked by a smile. His temporary connexion was worth a good deal, for to those women who were ambitious it meant some desired office for husband or brother—to others it meant 10,000 francs. An additional centime would put all straight again. We are able to agree with a friend of the Emperor's who said: "He is extremely kind, generous to a fault, and never forgot those who had loved him, or those whom he had loved for that matter. But easy as he was to captivate, generous in the souvenirs he liked to leave behind him, he kept himself from all possible over-ruling. "He was led by his mistresses," says a libeller. And there is nothing but an emphatic denial for these baseless assertions. First of all, the Emperor himself wrote, in his famous letter to Napoleon Jerome, Ambassador to Madrid: "You know me well enough to know that I shall never submit to the ascendancy of anybody, no matter who it may be." Decisive words

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which corroborate all that is known of his private life. And over the lover who attached no importance to his passing passions, his mistress had no influence except during the brief moments of his pleasure. And it is a woman who says that : “ Once he has left the object of his fancy, all is finished, he loves no longer. And if later she should claim his protection he will not refuse it, for the gallant man survives in him the lover.” I think that this observation is very accurate, because Sir Richard Wallace is not less explicit on the matter. Until by intimate knowledge he was assured of the stupidity of a woman, he was very easily attracted by the first pretty face he saw. Merimée, writing to Panizzi about the Emperor, from Cannes, November 27, 1866, said : “ His only fault is that he likes the *cotillon* more than becomes a man of his age, and he takes all women for angels from heaven. He gets excited about anybody, and dreams of happiness for a fortnight. Then when he has succeeded, he cools down and thinks no more about it.” This is touching the psychology of the Emperor’s love to the quick.

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Desire ; yes. Love ; no.

Did this prevent him from being a good husband? Fidelity must not be required of him. "He is inconstant for the sake of the women he has distinguished." And Baciocchi, his familiar friend, his confidant, concludes with justice : "He is as faithful in friendship as he is faithless in love." And with Gener Ricard let us add that it is called "love" because it has been agreed to call "these things" by that name. Was it not Rollet, the well known *procureur*, who objected to hear a cat called a "cat"?

Anyhow it was not Baciocchi of whom we are now speaking who was called a "cat." As everyone knows, he was made Chamberlain to His Imperial Majesty by a decree dated December 13, 1852, and accused by public spite of having been the means of satisfying the demands of Imperial luxury. And no puns or quibbling jokes were too bad for him. With proud tranquility he pinned a row of medals on his breast. He was almost suffocated by his uniform, and was almost dazzling with orders.

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In the three years, from 1848-1851, he was decorated fourteen times, possibly sometimes by those foreign potentates whose visits to Paris he had assisted to render agreeable. When Victor Emmanuel arrived in Paris he usually exclaimed: "A cab and Baciocchi. I want nothing else." It seems that Comte Baciocchi played an important part in the gallant intrigues of the Imperial Court, and it was under him that the arrangements commonly known as the "service des femmes" was inaugurated. If he did always choose the persons, at least he managed to get those whom his master desired. One is bound to suppose, for it may be taken for granted, that his confidences on this point have not been printed, that his competence for the work led to his nomination to the office. He opened negotiations. And we are told that "*all* the pretty women at court flattered Baciocchi to arrive at the Emperor." *All* is saying a good deal—the Emperor would not have sufficed. On the death of Baciocchi, the office was filled by the Vicomte de la Ferrière, and Napoleon III. was watched and guarded in his gallant expeditions when

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they took place outside the Tuileries by a man whose position was an "uneasy one," and who having the rank of Prefect followed him everywhere, and was the chief of the secret police. His name was Monsieur Hyrvoix. They said that "his manners were vulgar, although his appearance was irreproachable." He was a police spy like any other. I have seen photographs of this Monsieur Hyrvoix surrounded by his young and charming family. They all showed him to be a police spy of the kindly type, with hair standing on end. He had been found among Louis Napoleon's faithful followers in the early days. He figured with Persigny and General Piat on the Bonapartist Committee, April, 1848. He also belonged to the famous group of the *Dix Décembre*, by whose agitation the Prince arrived at the Presidency. He was to be relied upon, but he also was watched. Secret operations carried on by Collet Meygret, Director of the Public Safety, for the purpose of having weapons against his rivals and superiors, show that Hyrvoix was no exception to the rule, and the following police report indicates

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the way in which they tried the strength of his discretion:—

“ The report is going the round of Paris, while the Emperor was at Plombières, that M. Hyrvoix has sometimes been mixed up in the Emperor’s private life, and it was thought at the Ministère de l’ Intérieur that M. Hyrvoix would perhaps give information on this delicate subject to his mistress Mme. de living in the rue de Caumartin. And in order to ascertain the facts of the case, all the correspondence received by this lady for some time was opened; but nothing was found beyond the ordinary effusions of an absent and restless lover. It was the postman of the rue de Caumartin who handed the letters over to the agents of the Ministère de l’ Intérieur.”

But if Hyrvoix was discretion itself in what touched the Emperor, he was less discreet in what concerned the reports in Paris about the Empress. His disgrace was immediate, and he was sent to the Jura, as Receiver-General. I am not able to say how the previous work had educated him for this high office. He had always worked zealously for Napoleon III. He

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avoided anything which could give publicity to his master's misconduct, which after his fall was noised abroad in the most regrettable manner.

“The French,” says a Prussian of 1870, “have peculiar notions about the sacred character of family life. And it is certain that Napoleon III. gave much scandal in this respect.” However, it must be acknowledged that during the Empire, and all the time that he occupied his post, Hyrvoix knew how to make the scandal one of private life. And it is true, that although the Emperor's “weaknesses” were known to the Court and spoken of in boudoirs, the public knew but little about them until 1870, in which year official publications and libels, apocryphal and authentic memoirs, took it upon themselves to inform the nation. And as it always happens in times of hatred and anger, lies and false reports formed the foundations of the scandal. No one troubled about psychology or thought of the man's character, but everyone shouted aloud indignantly the story of his “orgies.” The day, perhaps, has now arrived in which these fables may be justly examined, and an

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attentive enquiry made into all those contradictory reports through which glides the figure of Napoleon III., with his vague enigmatical and tired smile—the lover whose ardour is extinguished.

II

THE AMOROUS EMBASSY

Mme. de Castiglione and the Italian ardour—Her marriage—Sensation created in Paris by her beauty—She has little esprit—Morbidity of her admiration for herself—Adventures of Doctor Arnal—The ball at the Tuileries—The audacious impudence of Mme. de Castiglione—Her public *deshabillés*—The ill-placed *fichu*—The hermite who causes scandal—The legend of a gallant and political Embassy—Relations of the Emperor and the Italian—The habitations of Mme. de Castiglione—The hotel in the avenue de Montaigne and Napoleon's) adventure there—The bedroom of the lady—The generosity of the Emperor—Mme. de Castiglione and the Imperial cassette—An obliging husband—His end—The Comtesse after the Empire—Was she passionate?—Mme. de Castiglione and love—Her son—The apartment at Place Vendôme—She wants to write her *mémoires*—The most beautiful woman of the century—Remembrance of a night of her youth—Death of Mme. de Castiglione—Her tomb,

THE words said by Saint Theresa, in the rocky and sad city of Avila, in Old Castile: “ God in his

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favour made me : I have always been looked upon with pleasure wherever I have been," might have been said by Virginie Marchesa di Castiglione at the time when her beauty was gone, and she retained only the bent and melancholy grace of her former self. And truly, beauty was the *Deus ex machina* of her adventures, and is the only reason for writing about her to satisfy human curiosity. She was the incarnation of foreign poison, the element of cosmopolitan decomposition, inoculated into the veins of Imperial France, of that society en fête from 1852-1870, which prepared with such magnificent gaiety the coming of the Barbarians. She was the voluptuousness of Italian languor personified, of those oppressive gardens which surrounded the perfumed lakes, and which reflected under the blue Italian sky the Tuscan yew trees and the Florentine cypresses. Her very name called forth memories of radiant times of long ago, magic and sublime, and her beauty, with her fairness of her skin, her languor, her hauteur, superb and disdainful, made her the symbol of that land towards which all hopes and desires turned. It



MME DE CASTIGLIONE

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was at Florence, March 22, 1835, that her lovely eyes first opened to the light of day. Her father was the Marquis Filippo Oldoini, the first deputy from Spezzia to the Sardinian Parliament in 1848, and later on the Italian Ambassador to Lisbon—modest man and amiable colleague, who returned and caught cold shooting partridges, and died at Spezzia. Her mother was of the Lamporrecchi family, of that Antonio Lamporrecchi who had been the tutor of Louis Napoleon. Was Virginie the daughter of the Marquis Oldoini? She herself said later on that it was not discreet to accuse one's mother, and hinted that she was descended from Joseph Poniatowski, Prince of Monte Rotundo, attached to the Court of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. She was forty years old when she asserted this story of her parentage. Her mother died young, and this was the reason why she was spoilt by her grandparent, Antonio Lamporrecchi. Nothing was too good for her, and she had everything she desired. A box at the Pergola? It was taken. A carriage to take a drive in the twilight? It was bought. A husband? No, not at all. But there

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were many who silently adored the disdainful girl. Young Francesco Verasis, Count de Castiglione de Castigliola d'Asti, who, a widower at twenty-six years of age, was anxious to bind himself anew. He spoke to Virginie—who refused him. She did not love him at all. “That will not matter,” he said; “you will never love me, but I shall have the pride of knowing that the most lovely woman of the day is mine!” He was a wise mortal, satisfied with appearances. And as he asked for that only, very well then—Virginie married him.

Oldoini did not appear at the wedding. He had heard the rumours spread about his daughter's birth, and it seemed as if he was not sure that it was his own daughter who was being married. However, I am quoting M. de Meneval, Attaché to the French Embassy in Portugal, and I gather that the Marquis Oldoini was pleased to hear his daughter mentioned, and he often spoke in enthusiastic terms about her beauty. When she became Comtesse de Castiglione she lived in a château on one of the hills near Turin, and was presented at Court. Was she the mistress

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of the Duke of Genoa, the husband of that Princesse of Saxony, Elizabeth Maximiliana, who became Marquise of Rapallo? We will not trouble ourselves about it, because it is the French side of Mme. de Castiglione's sentimental life with which we have to deal in this place. For the same reason I will pass over what was talked about her in London, where she spent a season, and come at once to her life in Paris, where she arrived in the full splendour of her beauty and with ruined fortunes. Her beauty was of that order which is so offensive to other women in the society she was entering, but it was absolutely impossible not to recognise her beauty. In the homage which even her rivals were compelled to pay to her beauty—one easily guesses the bitterness of defeat they suffered without any consolations. That may be the reason that the praise of her was restricted. A frequent visitor to the Tuileries says "she was very beautiful indeed, but to my mind her beauty was of the body and not of the soul. This kind of woman seems to me to be rather an object of art, a very fine ornament to the drawing-

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room, but scarcely capable of touching the heart.” And as she had an air of almost Olympian pride, “people were hardly disposed to forgive her for being so beautiful.” But she found the men unanimously in her favour. They did not argue about her beauty. Someone said she was the most beautiful woman ever seen, and another remarked that although she was as tall as a drum-major, and but badly dressed in the first instance, she was the most beautiful woman, nothing finer had ever been seen. She had passed completely unnoticed in Piedmont for all that, says Comte de Reiset. That is because Piedmont was, then at least, the nursery of this kind of Venus. But in the Paris drawing-rooms, where creatures like her were not often seen, her magnificent violet eyes, and perfectly shaped arms and hands, and brow and features of irreproachable beauty, did not long remain unnoticed. Viel Castel tells us of her appearance at a *bal costumé*, given Tuesday, February 17, 1857, by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. She was dressed as the “Queen of Hearts,” the boldest costume that could be imagined. She quietly enjoyed

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the remarkable curiosity of which she was the cause. She was insolent in her beauty, which she exposed with ostentation, and he goes on to say:—

“The proud Comtesse wears no stays; she would pose with pleasure to some Phidias, if such an one could be found in these days, and she would be clad in her beauty only. Her throat is really wonderful, erect like the throat of young Moorish women; no line to be seen, and her two breasts seemed to openly challenge all women.”

But did she really challenge women? Viel Castel gives us information on this point, and repeats the remark made by one of the guests who was dazzled by the lady's beauty: “Take care Comtesse, the men's clothes will soon be too tight.” And it seems the Comtesse was not displeased. This quotation could be used as an answer to those who wrote that with regard to the beauty of Mme. de Castiglione, “admiration excluded every other feeling.” This was not the opinion of the men at the ball of February 17, 1857, nor was it the opinion of Napoleon III. “Her beauty, however, was not accompanied by intelligence.”

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She did not seem to be very “spirituelle.” “She has nothing to say,” writes the Maréchal de Castellane, March 3, 1856. Opinions are unanimous on this point. “She is too beautiful, and very happily, she is beautiful only.” That was the opinion of a diplomat. Here is Napoleon’s opinion: “She is insignificant and insipid.” At a concert she said to her neighbour: “Tell me when I must applaud, for I know nothing about it.” And that is why an Englishman said drily: “She expressed her views so elegantly and strongly.” Yes, but on what? She was very proud of this beauty without intelligence. There was something morbid and sickly in this admiration of herself. Paul Baudry asked the favour to paint her full length, and she found the portrait so lovely that she was jealous of it. She cut up the canvas with scissors and finally threw it into the fire. She grew to love the whiteness of her skin, for in a room lighted by a night-light she slept in black silk sheets. “She is beautiful,” said a woman who saw her. “And she decorates her beauty with extreme care. To look at her is to admire her, and she goes home

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contented with her success and certain that she was the belle of the ball. She is like some goddess who deigns to show herself a moment to her worshippers and then disappears. If that amuses her, much good may it do her! ” It was no amusement to her, it was a sort of cult. There is an anecdote which confirms this idea. One day when she was at Havre she was ill and sent for Dr. Arnal, the Emperor’s physician. In spite of his patients and his august client, Dr. Arnal caught a train to Havre, and on arriving drove at once to the hotel where the Comtesse was. Unfortunately she was not visible for the moment. Arnal went for a little walk and then returned. And again Mme. de Castiglione was not in a condition to receive him. This comedy was repeated two or three times. Worn out and angry, the doctor declared that he would not return again, and that he would go to the station to take the train back. And then only did Mme. de Castiglione allow him to enter the room. He found her lying in bed, covered with lace and furs, and her hair was dressed as if for a ball, and all her diamonds about her. Was this play-acting? Doctor Arnal was

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an old man and long past such seductions. This gives an insight into the morbidity of her psychology which can be gleaned from the writings of her contemporaries. Comte de Maugny sums it up admirably : “ Quite infatuated with her own superiority, disdainful and haughty, her worship of herself was almost idolatry. She thought she was of a different ‘ stuff ’ from other and more simple mortals, and she stood at nothing if there was occasion to show, and she did condescend to show from time to time her physical advantages to the gallery.” And at this point we enter into the story of Mme. Castiglione.

The Comtesse made her entrance into the *Grand Monde* at a ball given by the Duchesse de Bassano, née Pauline Van der Linden d’ Hooghvorst, who had married in 1843 the Duc de Bassano, eldest son of the first Duke of the name. The Duchesse de Bassano died in Paris 1867, *dame d’honneur* to the Empress. M. de Bassano, born in 1803, had been a volunteer on the staff of the Duc d’Orléans at the siege of Antwerp in 1832. Secretary to the Embassy at Constantinople, Madrid and Brussels, Minister Pleni-

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potentiary in Baden and Belgium, and the Second Empire calling him to the Senate made him Grand Chamberlain. It can be said without the slightest malice that he was the ante-room to the salons of the Tuileries. And Mme. de Castiglione passed with ease from his soirées to the *bals costumés* and *fêtes* at the palace. And these fêtes are important episodes in the history of the Empire. The luxury displayed pointed to the prosperity of finance. The red coats, embroidered in gold, of the Chamberlains, mixed with the sky blue uniforms braided with silver of the military officers. The equerries were very magnificent in their leather breeches and patent leather riding boots. Officials were resplendent in court dress with embroidered collars and facings, sword at side and opera-hat under the arm. And down the passage thronged by the gentlemen of the Household, dressed in cashmere breeches, silk stockings and buckled shoes, the Emperor, dressed much in the same style, passed slowly, stroking his moustache. “*Sans blague*, it was splendid,” as *Flaubert* said to George Sand on leaving. Such was the scene of

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action reserved for Virginie's triumphs. She first appeared at the ball given on November 24, 1855. She was accompanied by a dazzling gentleman with white hair, curled very carefully, who was familiarly called "Chinchilla" by the ladies at Court, and who was no other but Jules Agésilas Alexandre Marie François Comte de Grossoles Flamarens, born at Münster, in Westphalia, March 15, 1806, and in the Senate since the 4th of December, 1854. Fair and bustling, curled like a poodle, "and as stupid as two geese," with his income of 30,000 francs and another 30,000 francs of his Senator's fee, he had been for fifteen years Mme. de la Châtaigneraie's lover. "She was as silly as a frog," but as Viel Castel said, "chatterers like that are able to keep their lovers for a long time." He acted as chaperon for Mme. de Castiglione, and she had good need of one, for almost naked, "she allowed us to admire her divine perfections," said the Marquis de Massa. She started those indecent, bold and scandalous costumes which caused a critic to say in 1871 "that ladies appeared at the '*bals*' in the dresses of *Courtisanes*,

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all but naked.” There is a slight sketch left by an eye witness which must suffice here. The Comte de Maugny says: “I shall never forget a certain *bal costumé* at the Tuileries, where she appeared half naked like one of the goddesses. It was a revolution. She was dressed as a Roman woman of the Decadence, her hair loose, and falling thickly and softly in its luxuriance on to her shoulders; her dress, split up one side, showed her legs in silk tights, and a foot of exquisite perfection, with costly rings on each toe, protected by tiny sandals. She arrived at two o’clock, with Comte Walewski going on before her, making way through the crowd, and hanging on the arm of the Comte de Flamarens, still very decorative, although he was past the age of gallantry. The Empress had left the ball, and there was an indescribable tumult at Mme. de Castiglione’s entrance. She was surrounded, everyone tried to get near to her. Women, losing their heads and forgetting all about etiquette, stood on the chairs to be able to get a sight of her; as for the men, they were hypnotised.”

Viel Castel was doubtless thinking of this evening

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when he wrote without comment : “ Mme. Castiglione is a courtesane like Aspasia, proud of her beauty and covering only enough of it to be received into Society.” And an Englishman says chivalrously : “ The Countess was remarkably extravagant.” People often took care to remind her of it, as, at that soirée when she had appeared “ décolletée to her waistband,” with but a “ soupçon ” of bodice. Someone walking behind her trod on her dress. She exclaimed vigorously, “ *Fichu maladroit, va!* ” And he who had committed the offence and was witty replied gently : “ Ah, Madame, the *fichu* on your pretty lips would perhaps be better elsewhere.”* Did she remember this lesson

* Play upon words, fichu, meaning both.

when she was tempted to prove that she could also be witty at times. One evening, at a party given by Comtesse Stephanie de Tascher de la Pagerie, the notice that she would appear in some *tableaux vivants* attracted a great number of people anxious to admire the exhibitions of the nude, and when the curtain rose she was seen seated in a grotto, her hands folded, and she was dressed in the

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costume of an austere hermit. Of course something else had been expected; they thought they had been cheated, and hissed. Mme. de Castiglione was furious and stiff with anger, and soon left, saying, "They are horrible." *They* were not horrible, they had been given something they had not come for, that is all. "She seemed perfectly calm and cold preparing for effect, and going straight to the point she wished to arrive at," said the Comtesse Tascher de la Pagerie. But for this once she had not succeeded. "Her real satisfaction was centred in self-love." And in this respect, perhaps, her *liaison* with Napoleon III. went beyond her hopes.

One day, it seems, the Emperor asked Mme. de Castiglione why she did not care more for all the homage lavished upon her. "If your Majesty," she answered, "had heard nothing since you were six years old, but 'How lovely you are!' you would have as little taste for it as I have." But was she really disgusted with it? The astonishing care she took of this beauty which wearied her proves the contrary, and everything in her *liaison* with Napoleon III. proves

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that she was not. People have tried to find diplomatic and political foundations for this *liaison*, on the strength of what the Comtesse did and said, and tradition makes of her a gallant Ambassadress sent to Napoleon III. to plead the cause of down-trodden Italy between the effusions of love. A fragment of a letter from Cavour to Cibrario, of the Foreign Office, says of her: "I have asked her to coquet with the Emperor with the intention of seducing him if possible." But why has the whole of the letter never been published? And what does a fragment like this prove? Asked to seduce the Emperor, she succeeded, and it has been proved that the task was not difficult, either for her or for others. But did she play a political part? That is another affair! I have already shown that she was not intelligent, and this is proved by the fact that as a reward for a rather important political mission, Cavour promised her what? To name her brother secretary to the Embassy at St. Petersburg. That was pricing the freedom of Italy cheaply. I know quite well that she gladly said: "I have made Italy and saved the Papacy."

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But who can prove it? And was it for this high and delicate task that she spent her days in Paris?

“What, is there no sweeter pastime?” That is what they would have us believe. Those who have faith in the political tradition of Mme. de Castiglione do not seem to suspect how comical are the grave hypotheses, and I am of the opinion that she “was beautiful enough to seduce without diplomacy having anything to do with the subject.” In a word, she came, he saw her, she pleased him, and as the Prince de Ligne says, the rest was done in idle talk, for she belonged to that race of Italian women of 1817 of whom Stendhal remarks that they adore moustaches, particularly those who have passed through the reviews of Napoleon.

And the moustaches of that Napoleon were very fine! It was at a ball, held January 9, 1856, at Princesse Mathilde's, that Mme. de Castiglione was officially presented to Napoleon III. And when at his tutor's, the lawyer Lamporrecchi, Virginie's grandfather, had not the little girl often jumped upon his knee? He found her now a woman, and

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what a woman ! But for all that she did not win him at once. One who witnessed this meeting says : “ She was beautiful, but very coquettish, in a poor way. Her dress, and more especially her coiffure, was pretentious. She wore pink feathers in her hair, which was worn puffed over her temples ; the rest of her hair was caught up behind with two curls which fell. She looked like a marquise of former days, with her hair dressed *à l’oiseau royal*. She did not know what to say to the Emperor, who was not at all impressed by her, for going away he said : “ She is beautiful but she seems to have no intelligence.” So that it is wrong to say that she succeeded from the very first. All the same the conquest did not take long. We are accustomed to rapidity in his case. On the following February 6, a contemporary note-book says : “ Much was said about the star of the day, a young lady either Florentine or from Piedmont, astonishingly beautiful, and who is causing a good deal of heart-trouble. The Emperor is very attentive, and she is the fashion.” And he had begun to show “ a very lively admiration ” for her, and not to hide his

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decided liking for the beautiful Italian. He was even indiscreet, for July 23 Viel Castel notes: "At the last fête at Villeneuve l'Etang the Comtesse de Castiglione wandered away with the Emperor for a long time in the island on the little lake. When she came back she was rather untidy."

Certain indications point out, however, that she did not become the Emperor's mistress until 1857, when the Court was at Compiègne. "The affair was notorious." It was at this time that the Princesse Mathilde, Napoleon III.'s cousin, and his quondam fiancée, took Mme. de Castiglione under her protection, procuring invitations for her from the Ministère de la Marine, which had been refused to the Italian by the Minister, and persuading Giraud, her pet painter, to do a portrait of Virginie. But the Princesse was not alone in her attentions to the Comtesse, the police also were attentive, and her correspondence was opened. The Comtesse said things which were repeated and commented upon. At a ball—balls play a considerable part in the life of the Comtesse—given in the Palais Royal by Prince Jérôme. She arrived

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at the moment when the Emperor was leaving with the Empress. "You come very late, Madame la Comtesse!" and the lover smiled. And she answered: "It is you, sire, who are leaving very early!" This, however, does not suffice to make Napoleon into a kind of gallant Louis XV. He was always gallant, with her as with others, perhaps a little more. He called her "Mina" in private. Is that reason enough to put him into a *justeaucorps* with lace cuffs at his wrists?

The Emperor went to see her at her house. She had rented an hotel at No. 17 Rue Matignon. Viel Castel says: "This hotel has a long and narrow garden, which at the end near the Champs Elysées has a little gate leading to a small shrubbery, and in consequence is very favourable to the introduction of a visitor fearing publicity." Then she lived in the Rue de la Pompe, and at No. 53 Avenue Montaigne, in a house belonging to M. de Lesseps, a delightful little Moorish house. It stood between the court and the garden, and was let furnished for 1,000 francs a month to a soi-disant Russian noble, "rather original," who never ap-

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peared. They say that the Emperor ran the risk of being assassinated one day. Between the lines of a pamphlet of Griscelli's they imagined they read that the Comtesse had been sent to Paris by the Italian patriots to get rid of Napoleon III. At the first meeting Luisa Corsi, nurse and foster-mother of the Comtesse, tried to let an armed man into the drawing-room behind the Emperor. But Griscelli, the decided, devoted, and terrible Griscelli, was there. "He was dead before he got at the door." A downward stroke of a dagger had pierced his heart. The Emperor examined the dagger and found it poisoned, and a reward of 4,000 francs was given to the intrepid Griscelli. "In the meantime General Fleury returned to the hotel, and conducted La Castiglione to the Italian frontier." And let him who does not believe this story go and see for himself! There was, however, an attempt to murder the Emperor, Avenue Montaigne. If we can believe Viel Castel, the Emperor was attacked by three men at the heads of the horses when he was leaving the house at three in the morning, April, 1857. The

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faithful coachman reined his horses so well that the three assailants were flung on to the pavement. I ask myself what the worthy M. Hyrvoix was doing all this time? Was he asleep? Or was he consoling himself for the difficult complication of his task in the rue Caumartin in the arms of that same lady whose correspondence was being waylaid by his colleagues, the police spies? There is no necessity for me to say that Mme. de Castiglione was neither expelled nor condemned to return to her Imperial lover in the Tuileries, neither had the Empress occasion to find her there. She is next found at Passy rue Saint Pierre, in a "house, more than modest, badly furnished, almost poor." The drawing-room was bare, the bedroom draped in white muslin with white bows. She used to lie on a sofa, wearing a cap à la Mary Stuart, trimmed with black jet, and a long black and white veil with pearls round her neck, wrapped in a white satin dressing-gown with a border of black jet beads. And there were portraits of her everywhere, in all positions, in all costumes, in all disguises, even one pastel representing her ill and in mourning for

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herself. And it was the eccentric and morbid woman to the life. It was the Emperor, naturally, who came to the relief of this Bohemian luxury. It has been said that "his money-bag was the only thing she loved in Napoleon III." Without solving this problem, we must acknowledge that Napoleon was a magnificent lover. If he gave her—and for my part I think the sum exaggerated—50,000 francs a month, "for gloves and sweets," he also loaded her with what she most loved, precious stones and jewels. The Duchesse de Dino writes, March 28, 1857: "The Emperor Napoleon has recently given an emerald valued at 100,000 francs to Mme. de Castiglione. It is the finest in the world. They say that no beautiful woman was ever so interested." Let us add a pearl necklace, which was sold for 422,000 francs after her death. A splendid gift, and when was it given? If this does not give us an idea of the sum total of the Emperor's liberalities it shows at least the scale and makes us understand how Mme. de Castiglione, ruined soon after her marriage, was able to die worth two or three millions. And her

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husband? He repeated to all enquiry: "I am the model husband, I hear nothing, I see nothing." I am not going to abuse him, his morals were most elastic, perhaps even he had none. It is a stupid, coarse story which says that he was jealous of his wife. If he had been, she would soon have taught him not to be so. From the time she lived in the Avenue Montaigne, in the principal rooms of the house—he had a wretched "dog kennel" on the ground floor. Sometimes she took him into society, when he gave himself up to conjugal ecstasy of doubtful taste, as if to say: "Look at the fine house my wife keeps up on 10,000 francs a month." Viel Castel made enquiries and has stated as a fact that the pair had an income of 18,000 francs only, while they spent from 60,000 to 80,000 a year. This was in 1856. Philibert Audebrand makes the figure up to 300,000 francs. But the husband hardly profited by it. He returned to Italy 1860, where, according to Griscelli, whom I do not follow in this, he took over the care of Victor Emmanuel's *parc-aux-cerfs* and managed it with success. One must, of course, not suppose that such was

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his work officially. He was the head of the King's Cabinet. He was thrown from his horse while escorting the carriage with Prince Humbert and Princesse Margaret, the day after the wedding, and died from the effects of the accident, May 30, 1867. "I still keep the 3 francs 40 ct., which he had in his pocket at the time," wrote the Comtesse. This miserable souvenir was locked up with the gala sword and the grand collar and Court decorations of this dishonoured man.

At this time, having passed like a meteor, she was but a far-off memory. Two years have seen Napoleon's love for her wither. Lord Malmesbury notes, May 25, 1859, "that the Emperor made pleasure parties to the country with Mme. C." This was but the embers of the fire of his love. Then after an absence she reappeared for a while, and on April 8, 1857, Mme. de Dino said: "Mme. de Castiglione, whose reign is coming to an end, is returning to Piedmont armed with her colossal emerald." About 1860 she retired to her Villa Gloria near Turin, on the top of a mountain peak, alone and bored, receiving no

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guests, and among servants dressed in black. She spent her days looking at the waters of the Po wending their way through the beautiful landscape behind the city with its towers and the far distant Alps. What neurasthenia made her return to spend her days among pleasures and fêtes? No one knows—but she suddenly conceived the idea to return to Paris, where she arrived September, 1860, and “they do not speak of her,” said Viel Castel on the 17th of the following November. She was watched by society, in which she was no longer interested. Then she was almost forgotten and sought to be unknown. She divided the time from 1864-1870 between France and Italy, condemned to expiations of which she had not the slightest conception. “Her fatal gift of beauty had already caused her much grief,” said one of her discreet admirers. What did she look for, and what consolation did she ask from forgetfulness in her bitterness? And was she still looking for love? Certainly adventures and lovers had not been missing. Nieuwerkerke, Superintendent of Fine Arts and lover of Princesse Mathilde, had fallen into her net. Although he

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asserted that he had "no desire to be her lover," he received her alone to tea and showed her at midnight from the roof of the Louvre the sight of Paris sleeping in the moonlight. And from the fact that when he was invited to dinners with her, he never offered her his arm and always sat far away from her, Viel Castel gathers that their relations were of the most intimate. Prince Napoleon said that she was the mistress of that Lord Hertford who had a wonderful collection of 250 clocks in his house, and whose life was poisoned for him because he could not succeed in making them all keep time together. This was that Hertford who gave Mme. de Castiglione 1,000,000 francs to spend the night with him. It is the Prince who furnishes the details. "As a night which cost 1,000,000 francs is exceptional, Hertford was exacting. He was paying, and paying dear, and reserved the right of dictating his terms. It is sufficient to say that the Countess remained three days in bed afterwards." I cannot vouch for the truth of the story, but I think that even if Mme. de Castiglione was innocent of the fact, it would

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not have been displeasing to her. It was not the kind of compliment to frighten her. "The most *risqué* things may be told her, she does not play the prude," says Viel Castel. For example, he mentions that dinner given May 10, 1857, by Princesse Mathilde, where one of the guests, seeing the Comtesse sucking a bonbon made of orange flower water and draw in the sweet liquid while she held it tightly between her lips. "Do you like à sucer, Comtesse?" "What?" she asked, smiling. She understood how to dot her i's in this case. Was she a woman of passion? Speaking about Lord Hertford, with whom she is supposed to have passed a splendid night, she said: "He has courted woman, but that is no proof of love." And so it might be said of her too that she had many lovers, but that was no proof that she was a woman of passion. And, in reality, although her depravity has been spoken of, as well as her luxury, she was a cold woman. That was why doubtless she did not think love to be of very great importance. This opinion expressed late in life seems to have been hers all her

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life, if we examine the adventures which are known. She had the image of love if not the flame and soul of it, and was at different times the mistress of J. Lafitte Alphonse de Rothschild, Duc d'Aumale, Duc de Chartres, General Estancelin. Is any further proof required that she intended to consolidate her fortune and that she exchanged those long passions which rend the heart and attune the infinite, for those which ignored the delicacy of love. She managed to prolong the illusion of the power of her beauty, which was the reason of her being, by accepting the faithful homage of these men, for she was already growing old. While she was in Italy the Empire was crumbling down, destroyed by popular rebellion, and she survived that past which was agonising in the flames of fratricide and charnel house—she was thirty-five. For a woman this should be the time when the flower of her gracefulness opens out to the twilight its delights and defies the breezes which bear away its petals. But she was Italian, born beneath a sky which brings things to perfection and makes them wither sooner than elsewhere.

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She must beware of wrinkles as well as of the first grey hair. And her son Georges, born of her marriage with M. de Castiglione, shows the public her age. What an unwelcome though innocent witness! She dressed him as a groom, and left him with the servants! This son, of course, escaped as soon as he was able from this extraordinary education, and entered the diplomatic service. He married a girl of the San Marzano family and died of smallpox at an early age. "They said that Mme. de Castiglione was not a good mother," wrote Mme. Carrette. But she wept for the loss of her son. "I could have and should have had other children," she sighed. Yes, to have made them dress like grooms and ride behind her carriage probably.

The Downfall of the Empire left Mme. de Castiglione in fear. She was an intriguer by birth and race and she began her intrigues at once. After having saved the Pope and made Italy, at least one would think so to hear her talk of it, she became a turncoat, and was going to establish the Orléans family on the French throne, a task for which her Italian birth made

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her particularly fit. She began by being the Duc d'Aumale's mistress. A very decorative *liaison* whom she soon relinquished for the more practical Duc de Chartres, who wrote : " Saturday, the 13th. You must give me an Italian lesson. I am just in the mood to work." How euphemistic ! He called that " teaching Italian." This did not last long. Mme. de Castiglione was soon disillusioned about these " Highnesses " for whom the throne had less attraction than a quiet life. She was alone with her lowered pride. She returned to Paris after the events of Versailles, and lived in small rooms over the Café Anglais. The famous Ernest was her factotum here, he who had played such a big part among the ladies of Paris in the height of the Second Empire. She then lived in the rue de Volney and afterwards—No. 26 Place Vendôme—at the corner of the rue de la Paix, December 25, 1875. She had quite a complicated system of keys and locks. The shutters were closed hermetically for seventeen years. And when she left and they tried to open them, dusty and worm-eaten, they fell

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to pieces. The room was draped with black felt and violet fringe, and the furniture covered with black velvet. Black mouldings ornamented the ceiling. And a lamp shed discreet rays round the tomb in which she buried herself alive.

With an old servant, perhaps her nurse, and two abominable snappy dogs, she lived there alone, shut up, offended by any light of day, raking over the ashes of the past, which slowly spread everywhere she prowled, silent and relentless. Between the slits in the closed shutters she could see the Place Vendôme, in the midst of which stands the bronze column of Victory, the Column of the Empire, and further on the doors of that Hotel du Rhin at which, in 1848, Louis Napoleon lodged, and the house where Mlle de Montijo stayed before her marriage. What memories filled her mind as she saw these houses. And further on the street bearing her name, in which, since Balzac's time, an honest woman can live on the third floor.* Her mania for taking rooms led her to

* Une femme logée au troi sième étage (les rues de Rivoli et de Castiglione exceptées) n'est pas une honnête femme Balzac, Etudes analytiques, &c.

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take some in this house. She had rooms in the rue Cambon, others in the Batignolles quarter, which, with the rooms in the Place Vendôme, cost her 18,000 francs a year. And into these rooms, full of furniture and clothes, she never went. She hid herself from the world, for which, as a matter of fact, she was only an object of curiosity. She had the bitter experience of out-living herself as it were. Sometimes she heard someone whistle beneath her window, and as she leaned out she saw Estancelin, one of her last lovers, on the pavement below. And she withdrew the bolts. She was obliged to move in January, 1894, because the house in which she lived disappeared in the improvements made by the jeweller Boucheron. And she went to No. 14 Rue Cambon, in rooms over the Restaurant Voisin. She was now approaching her sixtieth year, and plainly showed that her mind was as unsettled as it had been since her return to Paris. She seemed anxious to "cleanse herself of the past thirty years," and conceived the idea of writing her memoirs. The title alone was a treasure :

The Most Beautiful Woman of the Century,
(naturally) by
Mme. la Comtesse de Castiglione.

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What a pity that she could not carry out the plan! There one would have read the history of the formation of Modern Italy and the saving of the Papacy by the beautiful Virginie! She was full of plans of this kind. At the Exhibition of 1900 she wanted to reserve a special room in which five hundred portraits of herself should be on view. In the meantime she had love affairs with her servant Charles, and her concierge.

Bygone happy days, when the dear tyrant work did not keep me awake at night among my books! I was a poet in those days, with enthusiastic poet friends, who have since become sub-prefects and lawyers, and I sought the smile of glory in taverns where tobacco smoke hid the muse from those who sought her there. You will remember Moréas, him of the blue moustache, who struck the lyre in the footsteps of Ronsard, and Emmanuel Signoret, since descended to the kingdom of happy shadows, and you, who after having founded a new school of poetry, speed your time drawing up marriage contracts in that long, low room, with the vine turning

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yellow round the old windows. You must remember, how walking alone under the deserted arcades of the rue de Castiglione, which resounded to our tread, on the way to those bars where we drowned our lazy hours, and one of us said: "A fine poem could be made on that little old Mme. de Castiglione, who exercises her dogs in the rue de Castiglione." A fine poem truly, and a poem which would have contained less melancholy than the shadow we followed with our eyes until we saw it disappear into the rue de Rivoli, without the name of it telling us anything of what we have since learnt. And who among us thought of it, as we went down the rue des Capucines with Emmanuel Signoret proclaiming aloud verses to the moon.

That is the remembrance of the first and only time I saw Mme. de Castiglione. She had but a short time to live. She said she had thirteen different diseases, among which paralysis of the kidneys and curvature of the spine were incurable. Neither of these, however, carried her off. She had a stroke, and died November 28, 1899, at three o'clock in the morning,

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all alone, over the deserted restaurant. In her will she left minute instructions for the details of her last toilette. The chemise "of Compiègne of 1857," the first night with the Emperor, and a dressing-gown of black velvet and white plush, should cover her beautiful body burdened with earthly maladies. Her withered neck was to be ornamented with nine rows of black and white pearls; and two bracelets were to encircle her thin wrists. Her white head should rest on a tapestry cushion worked in floss silk, lined with violet satin, with bouquets of pansies and a violet cord. Her dogs were dead. She ordered them to be stuffed and placed at her feet in their blue and violet winter coats embroidered with her monogram, and strings of flowers round their necks. And it was on this theatrical display that the carpenter nailed the coffin lid. The coffin was carried to the Madeleine, November 29, at three o'clock in the afternoon. Eight or ten friends stood around, amid the heavy smell of the yellow candles and faded flowers. This was the funeral process of the divine Virginie, silent, solitary and forsaken. After the absolution, and with

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the drops of holy water still wet upon it, the coffin was lowered into the cellars of the church for a time.

Some time afterwards it was buried in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, "Division 85, row 3, face 84, No. 43 of 87," is the laconic description in the cemetery papers, which I have before me at the moment. It is high up, overlooking Paris, near the Mosque falling to ruins in that melancholy uncultivated part of the cemetery, where the thistle grows through the rubbish, and the thick heavy smoke from the crematorium fills the air. On the stone, still new, rain and dust are doing their best to efface the short and dry inscription :—

Virginie Oldoini
Comtesse
Verasis de Castiglione
Décédée
le 28 Novembre 1899.

And wandering a moment among the tall grass in the enclosure of the decaying Mosque, I pondered awhile on this death, after having lived among the languor of Italy and wandered in the gardens of Turin and Naples, where the scent of the roses is

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heavy and faint, and having vented useless desires and unreasonable dislikes along the shores of those seas where the waves beat against the empty beach, to come at last to a muddy hole in a suburban cemetery ! My imagination was strongly touched by this effacement. She had forbidden pomp at her funeral ; and demanded silence and oblivion for herself. But in that afternoon drawing to a close, while the factory whistles rent the dull air, I remembered the words of Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly : “ When one has dared to be an Amazon, one must not be afraid of the Thermodon Massacres.”

III

THE IMPERIAL LOVE-AFFAIR WITH MME. X.

The beautiful marriage of Mme. X.—She is elegant, beautiful and spirituelle—Her liaison with the Emperor—A witness—A menu of the Comte Horace de Viel Castel—A disastrous present—Problem of an obliging husband—An Imperial adventure in the train—A scandalous anecdote—Sums and presents given by Napoleon III. to Mme. X.—Her letter on the subject of the death of her husband—The war catastrophe—Mme. X., political correspondent of the imprisoned Emperor—Another letter of the Sovereign—The last mistress of Napoleon III.

WHAT a delicate task it is to speak of some one recently dead, whose ashes are scarcely cold, and whose memory is still alive among us. Discretion must be used in laying bare the truth absolutely essential to history. She came from Italy bearing a name known in the Annals of Florence. She was born in

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the city of the red lily, July 18, 1823. When she was twenty-three she married (June 4, 1846) a statesman of illustrious and imperial origin, and the widower of a princesse who had died in Paris, April 30, 1834. The husband had everything to please his young wife : very handsome, elegant, quite a *lion*, a rival of d'Orsay, proud of a great name, and of his high official position, she had nothing to reproach him with—but numerous love intrigues, dispersed at fancy. But for her, the enchantress, he reserved all his tenderness. “ She was well received by Society, which hoped the husband would soon give up his sadly dirty habits,” wrote a faded beauty of the Directoire, July 18, 1846. She had everything she could desire. She was elegant, certainly the most elegant of the women at the Court of Napoleon III., her mental charms equalled the beauty of her person. There was something very attractive in her slender figure and delicate profile. Added to that she was kind and good and witty, flattered by all, loved by women so much that when she left the Embassy in London with her husband, the ladies of the aristocracy subscribed to offer her a



MME X

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bracelet. She was able to hope that she would be able to keep the light and brilliant husband she had chosen. If she did suffer illusions in this respect, time quickly undeceived her. He went on with his gallantries up to the very end.

Did she seek consolation elsewhere? Did she try to win a grand revenge on personal grounds? "Sovereigns were at her feet," it has been written. Was Napoleon III. among them? A lady of the Court, and not one of the scandalmongers of the time says: "Madame X. is looked upon, and rightly, as one of the most beautiful women of the Court. She has inspired the Emperor with a lively sentiment for her, and the Empress also, which proves much in her favour. She has more *savoir vivre* than wit, but she knows how to please everybody, because she is pretty, gracious and kind, and avoids all haughty airs and does not boast about the high favour she enjoys at Court. She is certainly the best asset in her husband's political position."

I think the *liaison* between the Emperor and Madame X. is an accepted fact. To go into details,

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I shall quote from an author whom I have already quoted frequently, although I scarcely esteem him. I am speaking of Comte Horace de Viel Castel. This gentleman, who was a true ferret in a drawing-room, was born in 1797, and came into the world gallantly. By his mother, he was Mirabeau's nephew, which led him straight to the gaming house, of which he became a strong supporter. He was an honoured guest at the Café de Paris, where on a certain evening he had a bet of 3,000 francs with an Englishman, in the sole aim to prove that he was capable of eating and digesting a dinner which cost 500 francs. He won the bet, and here follows a menu of the dinner :—

Potage Essence de Gibier
Vin de Tokay
Laitance de Carpe au Xeres
Cailles désossées en caisse
Truite du lac de Genève essence d'écrevisses
Vin de Johannisberg glacé
Faisan rôti bardé d'ortolans
Pyramide de truffes entières
Clos Vougeot de 1819
Compote de fruits Martinique à la liqueur de Mme. Amphoux
Sorbet au Marasquin
Stilton
Marsala Glacé
Raisin de Malaga frais en grappes
Vin de Chypre de la Commanderie
Vin de Constance

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And this man who dined so well had a terrible pen. He was nominated 1852 Keeper of the *Musée des Souverains*, at the Louvre, where his name and his position gave him the entrance into fashionable Society, and he made use of this to listen to, and make notes of all the most scandalous stories of the time. He kept small note-books, which, after his death, having fallen into the hands of a woman cook, were published under the responsibility of M. Leouzon le Duc, in such a manner that if the story were told fully, it would be a comedy. M. de Viel Castel liked idle and scurrilous talk. Was this the effect of his relationship to the Torch of Provence? And he gathered it together with extreme care. "There is nothing as indecent or immodest as his scandalous anecdotes about the people of the Court," says a historian of the Second Empire. He was hard upon men, and was far from sparing women, especially those in high Society. He seems to have set about to apply to himself Rousard's *Apostrophe to the Woodcutter* :—

" Take fire and fetters, death and distress
For having slain our fair goddess! "

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He should have had punishment for this had he lived, but he is dead—and I imagine that lying between the four coffin planks he should get some of those epithets which up to now have been entirely reserved for Voltaire. But however that may be, he is the only one, we are able to follow through these by-paths. He is sarcastic, venomous, and spiteful, but he is the echo of the Court and Salons, and how many novels have no other foundation than the documents of Viel Castel?

He gives September 14, 1857, as the beginning of the *liaison* between Napoleon III. and Mme. X., “who is decidedly the Emperor’s actual favourite.” Let us notice that it is also the period when Mme. de Castiglione was also in favour. And on January 11, 1858, he notes: “Mme. X. is reigning now, but she is afraid of a return to favour of Mme. de Castiglione; she hides as little as may be from her favour, for she promises many people that she will help them with the Emperor.” Then the beautiful Virginie returns. “Madame X. is restless.” His watchfulness has no result. Viel Castel keeps silence for four months,

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then he goes on with his anecdotes, October 28. On Wednesday, the 27th, he was among those invited to Compiègne, and in the evening he finds himself with friends gathered round Princesse Mathilde. The conversation turns on Mme. X., whose husband has just received a present—of which we will speak later—from the Emperor.

“This present,” said the Princesse, “makes M. X. almost impossible. I have some letters from Germany which bear witness of the discredit into which he has fallen since they think he is rewarded as the husband of the favourite, and God knows he has no idea of his wife’s infidelity. Mme. X. is a veritable little *rouée*, who understood how to be friend of the Empress and the mistress of the Emperor at the same time, but she is much afraid of her husband, and I would put my hand in the fire that her husband knows nothing about it.”

“Not at all! Not at all!” answered Chaumont Quitry, one of the guests, and goes on to explain:

“Your Imperial Highness is, I believe, absolutely mistaken. The ignorance of M. X. is pure comedy.

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I have seen him with my own eyes, in the park at Villeneuve, turn back and retrace his steps on seeing his wife and the Emperor together in one of the Avenues. One morning M. X. and I were together, in a room adjoining the Emperor's room. Mocquard came to speak to his sovereign. He opened the door without knocking, then retreated and fell into my arms. Through the door I saw Mme. X. in the Emperor's arms—and M. X. had seen what I saw.”

Princesse Mathilde, while protesting her faith in the ignorance of M. X., tells the story as an example of the liberties which Napoleon III. allowed himself to take in his love affairs. She confirms what has been written about his methods of leading up to adventures.

“I know that the Emperor is very imprudent, that he scarcely puts any restrain on himself, and last year, when at Compiègne, we were all in an Imperial coach, divided into two compartments. Mme. Hamelin and I saw His Majesty making love to Mme. X. Mme. Hamelin and I were sitting near the

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folding door which separated the two compartments. The Emperor was alone with Mme. X. on one side; the Empress, M. X. and the rest were in the other compartment. The opening of the door caused by the movement of the train allowed us to see my very dear cousin seated on Mme. X.'s knees, kissing her lips and fondling her."

To bring these stories to an end, Viel Castel tells another :

The evening after this conversation Quitry told me that he had sometimes come upon the Emperor suddenly, when the Emperor would greet him, pulling his moustache, that he did the same, without laughing, both as grave as Precentors chanting the Epistle. " This intriguing little Mme. X. is such a *rouée* that I surprised her one day exchanging embraces with Fould."

This is not all that Viel Castel tells us. It is enough to turn over his pages to find again and again the name of Mme. X. March 8, 1859. He reproaches the Emperor for showing himself with her at a ball. January 5, 1860, for having given her hus-

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band unheard-of sums of money, which caused Princesse Mathilde to say that M. X. has “two strings to his bow.” And on June 24, 1861, he is obliged to confess that “Mme. X. is most persistent.” In reading the Memoirs of the Comtesse Dash, so slightly put together, I find she says, in speaking of Viel Castel, “that he is able to tell the most impossible stories without shocking propriety.” This hall-mark of modesty, given as it were no great connoisseur in the matter, gives me the strength to publish another of Viel Castel’s stories :

M. X. is very much upset: his wife’s credit is destroyed, she is among the reformed. Six weeks ago she was looking at a water-spout at Pierrefonds which had just been placed in a part of the restored castle. “That is very well done,” she said, “but such a conduit must have cost a good deal.”

“Less than your behaviour, Madame.”

N.B.—The story does not stand translation; the play of words—conduite, behaviour, conduct, conduit—cannot be reproduced.

Someone present rebuked the Marshal’s *Vivacity*.

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“You do not know,” replied Marshal Vaillant, “that this drag costs us four millions of francs.”

Mme. X. is out of favour. Did Mme. X. really cost the Emperor and Empire that colossal sum? I believe that it is impossible to give an accurate answer to such questions. We do know that a great number of cheques made out in the name of Mme. X. figure among Napoleon III.'s accounts with Baring Brothers, the London bankers, and that in 1856 the Emperor paid the heavy loss incurred by M. X. on the Exchange, but gifts like these do not lend themselves to exact examination, as those interested doubtless would do all in their power to avoid. The amount of one present only to M. X. from the Emperor is known. It is the price of some property in the Laudes, and cost a million. “We live in a time when adultery is rewarded,” Viel Castel thunders. M. X. accepted the present. “The beast loved money so much!” said Prosper Mérimée. If he loved it, he spent it, and right imperially. At the time of his death, which occurred at Strasburg, September 28, 1868, he was found to be “poor, or nearly so.”

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Shortly afterwards the widow received this letter from Napoleon III. :

“ Biarritz,

“ October 7, 1868.

“ My dear Madame X.,

“ I waited for the first moments of your grief to pass before writing to you. I need not tell you how I regret the loss of your husband, for he was always a devoted friend to me, and I have thought so much of your grief, and of all you must have suffered. In these sad circumstances, the expression of my sincere sympathy and of an old and tender friendship will be a small consolation to you. That is why I write to tell you that I shall give your children the friendship I had for your husband, and that you may *always*, as in the past, count on my affectionate and devoted sentiments.

“ Believe, dear Mme. X., in the sincerity of my regrets and in my friendship.

“ NAPOLEON.”

It is no longer the time in which little secret stair-cases were constructed which permitted her to join

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the Emperor in his rooms at Fontainebleau, that time when the lover told his cousin Mathilde: "That woman is after me and pursues me. Weariness has set in and tender souvenirs are effaced." It was no longer by stealth and fear of public scandal that he was so liberal. It was by an Imperial decree, dated April 20, 1869, that a pension of 20,000 francs was granted to Mme. X. She had only a few months in which to enjoy it. The thunders of September 4 drove her from Paris among the waifs and strays from the Imperial Court. She went to the *Hotel de Flandre* in Brussels, and took rooms on the first floor, where she found a brilliant circle of those who had escaped from the great catastrophe. She had not broken off her relations with the Emperor, and kept up a lively correspondence with him. And the captive of Sedan wrote to her from Wilhelmshöhe, January 4, 1871:

"I have received the two letters you were kind enough to send me, and which interested me very much. I thank you for giving me news of you from time to time. They are precious to me. Unfor-

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tunately you are not better informed at Brussels than we are here about future movements. One does not know whom to believe in the difference of opinions about the probable resistance of Paris. Everyone wants peace, but no one knows how it will be made.”

Our hearts, alas, know how peace was made! Mme. X. did not hasten to return to Paris after the peace. She did not return until 1872. Some months later she landed in England; she showed her regrets for the dead Emperor by his coffin, in the trace of her fidelity to her dead passion. She was among those who assisted at the funeral of the exile. Four years later she married again, in Paris, January 20, 1877. Thanks to M. Grévy, she was permitted to receive a portion of the pension granted 1869. The Republic gave her an income of 15,000.

She lived forty-two years after this the period of her glory and her youth. She died November 18, 1912. I saw her coffin start for the cemetery, all that remained of her wrapped in the shadow of the grave under the weight of marble. When I began this book

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it was in the vain hope that still a phantom of these stories of other days might remain. But each chapter has led me to a *tomb*, for it is only among the dead that the history can be written of that Empire which no longer survives.

IV

THE MARVELLOUS ADVENTURE OF “ MARGOT LA RIGOLEUSE ”

Julie Leboef, called Marguerite Bellanger, the peasantwoman—Her beauty, esprit and charm—Her beginnings in the high Parisian demi-monde—A famous lover—Meeting of the Emperor and Marguerite Bellanger—Legends surrounding this meeting—The truth about it all—Why Napoleon III. liked Margot la Rigoleuse—Specimen of an apocryphous letter—The court, the public and the liaison—Marguerite's pleasant trip to Nantes—Her expensive life—The house in the rue des Vignes—A mysterious birth—The love affair of the Emperor and Mlle. Valentine Haussmann—The son of Marguerite Bellanger—A complicated imbroglio—Hypothesis and suppositions—Margot after the fall of Napoleon—Her fortune—Her lovers—She gets married—Mme. Rueback, châtelaine of Dom-martin—Her death.

At first she was called neither Margot nor Marguerite, not even Bellanger. The civil condition which

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ignoring the playfulness and facilities of marriage in high life puts our imagination in order, and shows us that she was called just Julie Leboeuf, nothing more nor less, that she was born in 1840 at Villebernier, near Saumur. And here we remark that the great number of the Emperor's mistresses were foreigners.

As a little book printed in 1872 tells us, this rule which holds good in the case of Miss Howard, Mme. de Castiglione, and Mme. X., makes an exception in favour of Julie Leboeuf—for very French indeed was she. She left her native village early and went to Angers, where she made the acquaintance of a young man, since a “wholesale dealer,” who showed her the marvels of Nantes. One fine morning, in the lace cap with flying wings worn by the grisettes of Ponts de Cé, she took up her station behind the Graslin Theatre, in the midst of the ladies of fashion. The man who kept her had installed her there with an old woman called Adèle de Stainville to look after her. And thus “Margot” began to lead the “joyful life.” They say she was “simply tempting,” and it

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is not to be denied that she enjoyed the health and vigour of her native village—her blond beauty and frank face, rather thick ankles and deformed, “ugly” to look at, such natural flexibility that when lying flat on her back she could rise in one spring. She had no pedigree and looked more like a “*grisette*” than a “*cocotte*,” but the Society she was going to enter would be able to teach her very quickly all the means by which women who are destined to madden men by the beauty of their bodies conquer.

How she came to Paris, if she was a maid servant, or a figurante on the stage of the Théâtre Beaumarchais, and the Opera, the *ingénue* at the Folies Dramatiques is not known. I do know, however, that one day she took it into her head to act comedy, and she made her début in *Mademoiselle de Belle Isle* at the theatre in the rue de la Tour d’Auvergne. Her acting did not go very far. When the audience hissed she retaliated by picking up her petticoats, and left the play to proceed as it best might. The gay life was evidently more in her line. She began obscurely and never succeeded above the second-

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rate cocotte in the fashion of the day. She was for a while the mistress of the famous Gramont Caderousse, who led a gay life, and Marguerite, or rather "Margot la Rigoleuse," was a gay partner. She frequented the quarters of the officers of the Imperial Guard in the Ecole Militaire, and was always a good Bohemian, prodigal of her charms, a kind and careless girl, speaking brightly. She could have sung with the Grand Duchess of Gerolstein :

C'est que j'aime les militaires
Leur uniforme coquet :
Leur moustache. . . .

Just the very type of woman to be the mistress of the convivial head of the Empire for a week. Of all her adventures this, perhaps, is the most surprising and least expected. It never ceases to cause surprise, and we may well delay awhile to examine it more closely. How did she come to know Napoleon III. Tradition varies much on this point. I will put together a few versions of their meeting. "One morning the Emperor saw her sitting on a bench in the Bois. This inflamed Marguerite's imagination, and

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that very evening she wrote to the Emperor's Aide-de-Camp. That same evening, enquiries having been made about her, the Emperor went at once to her house." This seems almost mythological. There is another which lets us see her overtaken by a storm in the Park of St. Cloud, and the Emperor finding her sheltering under a tree. As he was driving at the moment, he threw her a rug. For a whole week Margot wondered what she should do with the rug, and then made up her mind to take it to the Tuileries. "The rest is known."

Yes, that is true, but one would like to have known more certainly how "the rest" began. There is another tradition. Napoleon III. was walking in the Champs Elysées with Mocquard, and gave Marguerite his coat to protect her from the rain. That seems very much like the legend of St. Martin and his cloak, and as we all know the Emperor was not the sort of man to imitate the acts of the saints. I am still talking about the numerous stories which have been made about the meeting. The Emperor was fascinated by her manner of riding on horseback at

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a hunt. I think this shows poverty of invention, and I prefer the story which shows Baciocchi presenting her to Napoleon III., with Marguerite entering the room walking on her hands, showing all her fascinations. If there is any merit in a history at all it should be at least original in its beginning. I believe we must look elsewhere for the truth, and that is in an anecdote told by a specialist in the secret history of the period. According to him, Marguerite Bellanger—she had taken this name to hide that of Leboeuf, which manifestly lent itself to easy jokes—was the mistress of an officer of the Emperor's household, M. D., who, although he was married, imprudently and openly advertised his connection with her. This came one day to the Emperor's ears, and he said: "It seems that you are a very lucky man, my dear D. and that you have a very charming mistress. They talk of nothing else at the Château. Would it be indiscreet to ask to see her?" The desire coming from the Emperor could not be refused. Marguerite was presented, was looked at, and gave satisfaction. M. D. understood and effaced himself. I think

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Baciocchi put the finishing touches, and there is no reason to deny this story or to believe any other.

Other reasons, besides the passionate fancy of the Emperor for Marguerite Bellanger, have been mentioned. Meanwhile the psychology of Napoleon III. explains the *liaison* perfectly. He only wishes to know the pleasure of love and that only. The moment that he is wearied with the woman distinguished by him for the time being everything is at an end. Marguerite Bellanger, vicious, somewhat vulgar, and quick in her speech, amuses him by her gaiety, her coolness and her unrestrained talk. And this pleasure seemed new to him—when he had just quitted the company of Mme. de Castiglione, and Mme. X., women of Society, aristocratic libertines—unexpected and unrehearsed, so that his strength gives way. “It is said that when the Emperor fell into the hands of a woman, he liked learning at her hands, and his whole being was invaded by her knowledge.” This seems both logical and probable, and so natural for him who “comes from his stiff and ceremonious atmosphere,” where

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certainly no one would dare to speak to him as she does, with her slang from the boulevard and the gay café's, and then her good temper, her kindness, and her submission, qualities which those other ladies—who are his only—do not possess. Catching men is her trade, and the Emperor is a good catch.

“Women,” says a pamphlet, “acquire power over Louis Napoleon by procuring him pleasure.” It has been seen that this is inexact, and it is only repeating the inaccuracy to say that we know the influence which Mlle. Bellanger exercised on his heart and mind, and that she was his Du Barry. The day when she tried to influence him “to play the queen” and to carry on intrigues, either by asking him for offices, or by screwing favours out of him, he knew how to prove promptly that he who said that “Marguerite Bellanger had no kind of influence over him whatever” was quite right. One has to wade through a great deal of rubbish to get at the truth about Marguerite Bellanger. This is frequently the case in trying to get at the history of any of Napoleon III.'s mistresses. After having resided for a time at No. 9

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rue Moquodor, and in the rue Pierre Charron, and the rue Boccador, it seems quite certain that she went to live at No. 27 rue des Vignes, in Passy, then so peaceful and almost rural, but resounding to-day with the noise of motor-cars.

In the *Confessions* of Marguerite Bellanger, which by the way are apocryphal, there is a note given as coming from the Emperor to Margot informing her that he is going to install her in a house of her own, a veritable nest for their affection.

“ Chère belle,

“ Come and see me on Monday, you know where. We shall not stay there for long. As I want to see you in your *own home*, I shall take you to a charming villa which I have bought and had furnished for you.”

This villa was in the rue de Vignes. As it was difficult for the Emperor to go there when at Saint Cloud, Marguerite went to live near the Palace. The same thing happened when he travelled. She followed him to Vichy, and one day went in a carriage to fetch him from the Imperial Châlet, where he was presiding



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at a Council of Ministers. She also went to Biarritz and to Plombières—"and she did not keep in the background, that was the secret of the comedy." The new *liaison*, by the vulgarity of it, shocked or amused people in the salons of the Aides-de-camp, and I have the story of one of them, the Emperor's Confessor was punningly called the Abbé Langer. There was a joke of another sort invented by Viel Castel against M. de Nieuwerkerke, Superintendent of the Fine Arts, who had refused to decorate him.

Viel Castel advised him to purchase the busts of four women, representing, as he said, the four seasons. "Works of art," he added, "of which one of my friends is obliged to dispose." Nieuwerkerke, who, as a matter of fact, knew as much about Art as a cat knows of music, offered the work to the Empress, and invited her to come to admire it with the Emperor. "Their Majesties did not admire it for long: the Emperor withdrew stroking his moustache, the Empress was in a rage and banged the doors. The four busts represented Marguerite Bellanger, the Emperor's latest fancy, in four different positions."

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I do not give this story as authentic. It must not be believed that Carpeaux, who made a beautiful bust of Margot, was an accomplice of the trick of which Viel Castel was quite capable.

Marguerite was capable of most unceremonious conduct. The following is an incident of her travels with the Emperor. Because of favours received, she looked upon herself as able to do away with all reserve or discretion. She laughed about the scandal caused by her presence at a charity sale got up by the great ladies of the Court. Mme. de Mouchy, for all that, was not above trying to sell her some very expensive things. "I am not rich enough," she said, refusing to buy. She was satisfied with more reasonable articles. "There are some people we should never know; I only saw in her a woman buying something for a charitable object," Madame Mouchy explained to those who were astonished at her complacency. But Marguerite found people in the Provinces who were less prudish. At Nantes, for example, the city of her début so to speak, when she put up at the Hotel de France, she had the best pos-

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sible reception from her former friends. She caused no scandal at the Hippodrome at Mauves, and everything was so satisfactory that she returned again to Nantes, and fell in love with a young man who hid her in a house in the rue de la Fosse, where Brichet the armourer lived. This kind of thing touched her. It seems almost certain, according to what was said by one of her friends, that even during the period of her *liaison* with the Emperor she kept up her relations with her former lover, one of the Equerries to the Emperor, and apparently the very man who had introduced her to the Emperor. This favoured lover went to the Rue des Vignes discreetly and secretly to take his "share of the pleasures due to his devotion and savoir faire." If Viel Castel had only known it! But what a pity, nothing is left of all this, not even one of the notes which she is supposed to have written on pretty paper, stamped with her initials, and a Marguerite with silver leaves and a golden heart and the ingenious device "All comes to him who knows how to wait."

It was the sudden luxury in which Marguerite

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Bellanger lived that opened the eyes of the public to the source of this new splendour. They saw her, and guessed. And that was how she earned the reputation of that "unbridled extravagance" with which numerous pamphleteers charged her later. "Some ignoble pamphlets," she is made to say in the apocryphal memoirs, "try to make of me a woman unsatisfied by the most extravagant luxury, a kind of she-wolf with a thirst for gold; I have had courage enough to read these. At first I was disgusted and then I wept." She did better than that, she laughed at them. A Communist thundered that Louis Napoleon gave enormous sums to this woman. He did, and how? Just one example. One day Marguerite bought a pair of horses for 25,000 francs and sent the horse dealer to the Tuileries with this note:

Dear little father,

I have bought two fine horses; they will do honour to your taste and your purse. They cost 25,000 francs, and that is not too much to give me pleasure. Give orders that the sum be paid to the bearer. I will return the amount in kisses.

Cher Seigneur

Je ne vous ai pas écrit
depuis mon départ craignant
de vous contrarier mais
après la suite de ce qui se passe
je vois devoir le faire d'abord
pour sans plus de ne pas
me méprendre car sans votre
estime je ne sais ce que je
deviendrais, ensuite pour sans
demander pardon pas être
culpable j'en suis sûr
Je vous assure que j'étais
sans le doute d'inter
cher Seigneur si c'est un
moyen de racheter ma faute
et je me reculerai devant

rien. Si toute ma vie de
dévouement peut me rendre
votre estime la mienne vous
appartient et il n'est pas
un sacrifice que vous ne
demandiez que je ne sois
prête à accomplir si il faut
pour votre repos que je m'aille
et passe à l'étranger. J'ai dit
un seul mot et je pars
mon cœur est si pénétré
de reconnaissance pour
tout le bien que vous
m'avez fait que souffrir
pour vous serait encore une
bonne cause la seule
chose dont à tout prix je
ne veux pas que vous doutiez
est de la sincérité et de la

profondément de mon amour
pour vous aussi je vous
en supplie repandez-moi
quelques lignes pour me
dire que vous me pardonnez
mon adresse est (M^{lle} Bellanger
rue de Lannay Courmoulin
Villeneuve près Lannay)
En attendant votre réponse
cher Seigneur recevez les
adieux de votre toute dévouée
mais bien malheureuse

Marguerite

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And do not go straightway and believe the story because the “*Memoires secrets du second Empire*,” edited by a Bachaumont of the gutter reproduced it entire! Then you have the *Confessions* de Marguerite Bellanger, herself to tell you that the man of the second of December gave her packets of 100,000 francs as if he manufactured them. And the *Testament de Napoleon III. trouvé dans le Boudoir de Marguerite Bellanger* will initiate you into many mysteries! I will leave all this filth to touch a more serious feature of the *liaison*; the motive of the rupture. To what must we attribute it? To the indiscretions “which in spite of the supervision of the prefect of the police,” of which the mistress was guilty in the short intervals between the Emperor’s visits? To her very open luxury and extravagance? To the condition of the Emperor, who might die prematurely of excess? We must choose the answer for ourselves, but I believe we must look elsewhere, and perhaps the truth will be found in an obscure intrigue which has not yet been brought to the light of day.

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On February 24, 1864, at half-past ten at night, Marguerite Bellanger gave birth to a son, whose birth was not declared until two days had gone by, when the declaration was made in very equivocal terms. We must read the document carefully.

“ Prefecture of the Department of the Seine.

“ Extract from the register of births in the 8th Arrondissement of Paris, Feb. 26, 1864, ten o'clock in the morning.

“ Birth certificate of Charles Jules Auguste François Marie, presented and examined to be of the masculin sex, born in Paris, rue des Vignes, No. 27, on the 24th of this month, at half-past ten in the evening, the son of unknown parents, the declarer stating, in answer to questions put to him, that he does not know the name or dwelling of the mother.

“ Declaration made in the presence of us, the assistant to the Mayor of the 8th Arrondissement, deputy, State-official, by Claud Mary Charles Fremy, doctor of Medecine, Knight of the Legion of Honour, 47 years of age, living No. 9, rue de Berlin, present

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at the birth, assisted by Charles Giraud, artist, Knight of the Legion of Honour, 45 years of age, of 17, rue du Centre, and by Victor Jean François Mangnier, 29 years of age, living at No. 8, rue Richepauce, who have both affixed their signatures after having read the deed.

“ CH. FREMY, CH. GIRAUD,

“ J. MANGNIER, A. GROUVELLE.”

It is very certain that on reading the above document one finds oneself face to face with witnesses who are playing a comedy. They all three declare that, knowing the residence, they know neither whence comes the child nor who is the mother of it? And one of the witnesses is a friend of Princesse Mathilde, the painter and caricaturist named Ch. Giraud, who frequents her salon. And he does not know that Marguerite Bellanger, the Emperor's mistress, lives at 27 rue des Vignes? Who can believe that? The State officer questions him no further. What can be said to that? There is something which still remains dark, and the subsequent remaining documents throw no light on the matter.

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It can be believed that with such data the pamphleteers have a fine time. Scenting a comedy, they accused Marguerite Bellanger of playing at motherhood, of substituting a child, and from a pamphlet called "Les Courtesanes du Second Empire," and especially from that part of it which treats of Marguerite Bellanger, we gather that Marguerite Bellanger saddled herself with a child brought to her some hours before. In the *Confessions*, the author of which makes her write with impudence, "This is, I say, a true story," and in the book so dull and stupid she owns "that she was *enceinte*, and by the Emperor." But we know there is no measure to such inventions. The above deed may lead us to believe in the substitution of the child. And in this case the presence of the artist Giraud and the absence of the name of the mother could be explained. What reason could there be in giving the child a name he could do without? These are only hypotheses; there is nothing certain in the affair. But from whence came the child? Here again, under the veil of allegory, the publication "Les Courtisanes du Second



MARGUERITE BELLANGER.

Bust by Corpeaux

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Empire,” informs us: “It was the son of the Emperor and Mlle. Valentine Haussmann, daughter of the famous Prefect of the Seine. This liaison had not escaped notice at the Court.” Malicious report had it “that the sovereign had peculiarly tender feelings for her.” Of course the report was denied. “To look at her is no crime, and certainly the Emperor has gone no further,” says a lady of the Court. But the defence is very weak, and carries no conviction. And it happened that at the Tuileries Mlle. Valentine Haussmann by accident took the seat of Mme. Oscar de Valleé, who said, bitterly enough: “I give my place up to you, mademoiselle, for it is plainly seen that you are the mistress here.” But it is the fact that the son she bore to the Emperor was born January 26, 1865, exactly one year after Margot’s son was born, which completely proves her liaison with the Emperor, and confutes entirely the supposition that Marguerite Bellanger pretended to be the mother of Valentine Haussmann’s son, who was called Jules Adrien. Why? He took the name of Hadot, December 20, 1883. I have my information from

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persons who were intimately acquainted with this son of Napoleon III. that he was the adopted son of M. Hadot, treasurer-paymaster-general at Melun, who, it is said, married a mistress of the Duc de Morny. As for Mlle. Valentine Haussmann, she married, February 23, 1865, Joseph Maurice Vicomte de Pernetty, from whom she separated June 21, 1883, and divorced January, 1887. In February, 1894, she married M. Georges Raynouard, and died in 1896, leaving a son by her first marriage, Charles Eugène Marie Didier Pernetty, born at Neuilly-sur-Seine, June 27, 1867, who perished 1910 in an accident at sea. These dates leave no room for any confusion. The son of Marguerite Bellanger took the name of Charles Leboeuf, which was her name, and was brought up by the widow of a jeweller who lived in the rue des Moulins, and afterwards in the rue de Richelieu. After his mother's death he married, and lived quietly and peacefully at Passy on his income. There was a hawker, an impostor, who died 1902 at the Hotel Dieu, who thought he was the son of Marguerite and the Emperor. As a fact, his birth certificate proved

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him to be Marie Joseph Paul, the legitimate son of Charles Casimir Bellanger and Pauline Celestine Fosbender. The true Bellanger asked nothing but silence and oblivion for his own name.

And now we must ask the question: Was he the son of the Emperor? There is a document, found in 1870 among the Emperor's papers, in an envelope sealed with the crowned N, bearing the words *Letters to Keep* in the handwriting of Napoleon III. The first of these letters is addressed by Marguerite Bellanger to M. Devienne, First President of the Court of Appeal. He had been charged to make an enquiry on the accouchement of Marguerite Bellanger, and if that enquiry was contested, then another, which resulted in the disavowal of the paternity real or supposed of the Emperor. M. Devienne went to find her in her home at Anjou. She was dressed *en deshabillé*. And he brought back the following letter, from the text of which it is impossible to conclude if Margot had played a comedy. It is quite certain that she had a child, that she had committed some deception, but what?—the rest is unintelligible.

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I give the letter, which leaves the field quite open to as many guesses as one likes to make.

“ Sir,

“ You have asked for an account of my relations with the Emperor, and whatever it may cost me, I will tell you the truth. It is terrible to have to acknowledge that I have deceived him to whom I owe everything; but he has done so much for me that I will tell you all. I was confined at nine months and not at seven. Tell him that I beg his pardon. I have your word of honour that you will keep this letter. Receive the assurance of my ‘*considération distinguée*.’

“ M. BELLANGER.”

Here follows Marguerite’s letter to the Emperor. She is just as ambiguous, and it is impossible to arrive at the fault for which she asks pardon.

“ Cher Seigneur,

“ I have not written to you since my departure for fear of offending you; but after M. Devienne’s visit I thought I ought to do so, first to ask you not to despise me, for without your esteem I do not know what will

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become of me, and secondly to ask your forgiveness. I have been guilty, it is true, but I assure you I was doubtful. Tell me, cher seigneur, if there be a way in which I may exculpate my fault, and I will stand at nothing. If a whole life's devotion can give me back your esteem, it is yours, and you can ask no sacrifice I am not ready to make. If it is necessary for your peace that I should go abroad and live in exile, say but the word and I will go. My heart is full of gratitude for all the good that you have done me, that it would be happiness to me to suffer for you. The only thing I desire is that you must not doubt the sincerity and depth of my love for you. I implore you send me some lines to assure me of your pardon. My address is Mme. Bellanger, rue de Launay, Commune de Villebernier, Mès Saumur. Awaiting your reply, cher seigneur; accept the farewell of your devoted and very unhappy

“MARGUERITE.”

These documents were handed over to the Emperor by M. Etienne Conti, the successor of Mocquard, Councillor of State, who had comically incurred the

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disgrace of Balzac, desirous of remaining *incognito*, and who died in 1872. It was to M. Conti that M. Devienne wrote:

“ Imperial Court of Paris.

“ Cabinet du Premier Président,

“ Paris, Feb. 19, 1868.

“ Sir,

“ I shall be very grateful to you if you will hand the enclosed letter to His Majesty. Please accept with my excuses the expression of my high consideration.

“ DEVIENNE.”

At this time M. Adrien Marie Devienne was occupying an important post. He was born at Lyons, February 2, 1802. He entered the magistrature when very young, under the Restoration. When the Monarchy of July came into power, he forsook the departmental courts, where he had been vegetating, and became ambitious of gaining political laurels. He married at Lyons, May 20, 1832, Marie Caroline Beatrice Vinant (born at Lyons, May 10, 1811, and died there April 27, 1857), and had, perhaps, a double

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hope to satisfy, namely, glory and fortune. He was successful. Sending in his resignation to the President of the Law Courts at Lyons, he sat in the Palais-Bourbon from 1843 to 1848. He returned to Lyons, however, in 1862, as Attorney-General. But he thought his place was in Paris and in high places, and he suffered no contradiction. In 1858 he was called to the Imperial Court of Paris as judge. He entered the Senate March 15, 1865, and replaced M. Troplong at the Appeal Court as judge. All these favours may, perhaps, explain a little the skilled diligence and discreet care brought by M. Devienne to his delicate and confidential mission. And the publication in 1870 of the documents given above caused considerable scandal.

M. Devienne at that time had taken refuge in Brussels, where the newspapers bear witness to his visits to the Théâtre de la Momnaie. The day following the publication, the Government who was directly responsible issued a writ against M. Devienne, which must take its place here among the papers referring to Marguerite Bellanger.

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“ The Government of National Defence considering that documents of a convincing nature, and made public, it follows that M. Devienne, Judge of the Court of Appeal, has gravely compromised the dignity of a magistrate in negotiations of a scandalous character; considering that M. Devienne, ordered to give explanations, has not answered the invitation sent him; considering that, although placed at the head of the judiciary body of the Republic, M. Devienne is absent from Paris in the hour of national peril:

“ Decrees:

“ M. Devienne is removed in a disciplinary manner from the Appeal Court, which will decide in conformity to the laws.

“ Given at Paris, Sept. 23, 1870.

“ For the Keeper of the Seals,

“ By proxy.

“ The Member of Government for National Defence,

“ EMMANUEL ARRAGO.”

As soon as he received the writ, M. Devienne replied in a letter to M. Cremieux; this is No. 5 among the documents.

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“ To the Keeper of the Seals.

“ Sept. 29, 1870.

“ Sir,

“ I hasten to accept the decision you have taken in your decree of the 23rd of this month. It gives me a legitimate and regular means of explaining all my conduct and destroying the imputations of which I am the object. I shall be the first to court enquiry when it is possible. My explanations will be neither long nor difficult. They will show the allegations and interpretations which the papers have spread about me are absolutely erroneous. I am certain that on the occasion when I fulfilled what I considered, and still consider, to have been my duty, I did nothing to lower my dignity. Accept the assurance of my high consideration.

“ DEVIENNE.”

This protestation was followed in a few days by another addressed to the proxy for the Minister of Justice. Although still vague as to the defence required by the decree, M. Devienne gave more explicit information in the second document.

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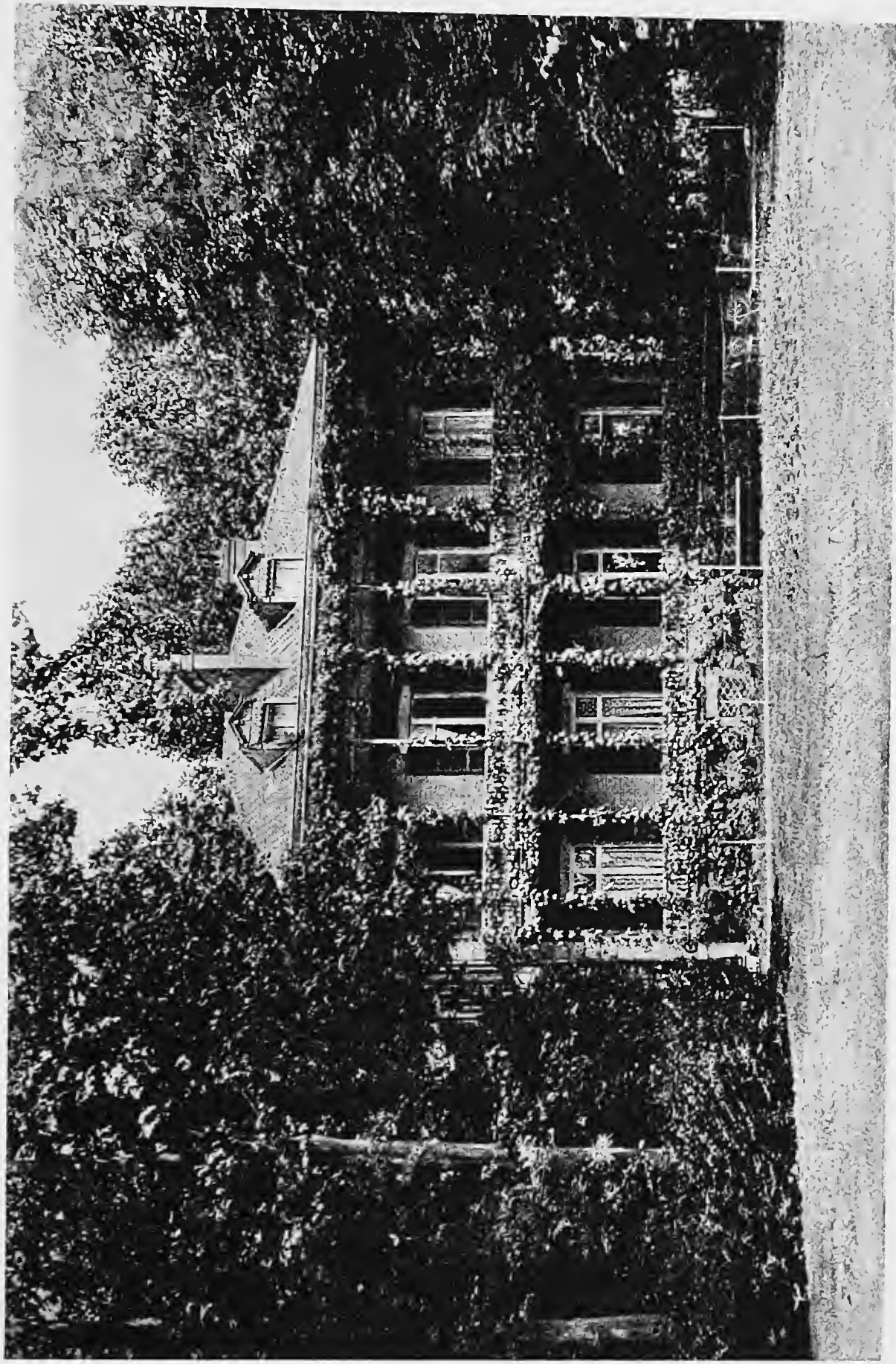
“ To M. Etienne Arrago.

“ Brussels, Oct. 2, 1870.

“ Sir,

“ Official papers and Government officials have multiplied their attacks against me in such a manner that I have found a writ signed by the Keeper of the Seals and again another sent by you. Yesterday I answered M. Cremieux with the deference due to his position. But I have not the same reasons to withhold my indignation from you.

“ You make public in the most violent of your officious papers documents which, according to you, will prove the unworthiness of the first magistrate of your country. And this without any hesitation, or rather with alacrity, and then relying on the scandal which you yourself have raised, you order the accusation of an old man honoured till then. Did it never enter your head that you might have been mistaken. When the condition of the country permits a loyal and regular discussion, I shall prove that I did not compromise my dignity in any negotiations of a scandalous nature, to which I have always been a complete



THE CHALET OF NAPOLEON III. IN THE PARK OF VICHY

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stranger. That your police, your papers, and you yourself, led away by the pleasure of striking a political adversary, you have blindly defamed me about an action which is quite different from those which you impute to me. You make appeal to the execution of the law; and I invoke it with still greater energy. The day of justice will arrive, and I await it with impatience. Accept the assurance of my esteem.

“DEVIIENNE.”

These contradictory protestations call for some reflection. In the first M. Devienne acknowledges the fact of his intervention in the affair of Marguerite Belanger. In the second he seems to deny it. And then, what does this sentence mean: “You have blindly defamed me about an action which is quite different from those which you impute to me”? This is pure nonsense, and probably should be read, “the occasion of an action quite different from that which you impute to me.” But this is trifling, and the impression made upon us is that the accused has his defence quite ready, and can produce it easily. But

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what will it be? He looked upon his intervention as a duty. Did he think the Emperor's command would shield him? Or again, and I am simply echoing a supposition already formed. The Empress—I dislike bringing this name into the business at all, but I am forced to do so—having heard of the birth of Marguerite Bellanger's son, and believing him to be the Emperor's son also, did she demand explanations? To reassure her, and to destroy the story of an Imperial bastard, did they invent the comedy of the enquiry, and did they demand and dictate Margot's letters? As it appears, the Empress was reassured. That was what M. Devienne maintained when he appeared before the Court of Appeal to explain his part in the affair. According to the terms of the statutes of the Imperial family, the civil code ordained that the task of reconciliation should be undertaken by the Chief Justice at times when there were signs of desiring separation or breaking off of relations. He affirmed that it was under those conditions that he fulfilled his mission to Marguerite Bellanger. He was believed, and July 21, 1871, he was acquitted by the

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Court of Appeal. He then undertook again his functions as judge, and carried on the work until he reached the age limit, and survived his retirement but a short time. He died July 9, 1883, in the Rhône, at his Château de Montgriffon, in the commune of Chaponest. And, according to him, he had been charged by the Emperor in this business. But did the Empress really ignore that at this date the Emperor had two sons very much alive, the sons of Eleonore Vergeot, his mistress at Ham? Only this ignorance, which seems improbable, could explain her wish to know the truth on the new rôle attributed to her husband. But once again we are falling into romance and imbroglio. I will just add one thing more, without any comment. It was for this son of Marguerite Bellanger that the Emperor purchased the Château de Mouchy in the commune of Liancourt-Rantegny (Oise). Let people think what they please about this purchase. For myself, I own that I understand nothing, but that I see strings in the play which I do not hold.

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From her *liaison* with the Emperor, “Margot-la-Rigoleuse” had drawn sufficient resources to face without fear the financial consequences of the fall of the Empire. She had built for herself in the Avenue Friedland a house which she let to her friend Antoinette Léniger. Further, she possessed a fine château in Villeneuve, not in Touraine as it has been said with a fine contempt for geography, but in Seine-at-Marne, near Dammartin. In Touraine and in Soissonnais she had property and a good income which allowed her to run several businesses, among which was a good lace house near the Bank. This fortune could not remain unknown, and a pamphlet of the period said “she was like a lamprey sucking all the millions in her neighbourhood; she was an octopus, and could be said without injustice to have no useless mouth.” These obscene insinuations give the tone of the press of 1870 in regard to her. At that time the publication of her letters to the “cher seigneur” made her the talk of the day. “Le Pays” said “she is love sick in Germany with her eyes fixed on Wilhelmhoehe like Clytie, until Providence shall take

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pity on her and put an end to her passion by small-pox.” The cruel wish was superfluous. Again, they said that she had broken with the Englishman, sometimes lord, sometimes officer, the exploiter of many extraordinary worthless women and widows of assassins of celebrated men. In truth, she was not dreaming of marriage, and in her retreat she consoled herself with several intrigues, which she carried on as if there were some fatal law which condemned women of her sort to an incessant gay life. She submitted to her fate. But this did not last long, and the day came when she also, like other women of her stamp, longed for respectability, and desired restoration. They say that then she married an officer in the English Navy, of the name of Coulback, who one day went to India and did not return. This officer is mythical; Coulback is a simple guess. Julie Leboeuf did marry a Prussian by the name of Kulbach, with whom she very soon quarrelled. But she survived this little matrimonial misfortune. Death took her by an accident. She took cold while walking in the park belonging to her Château at Villeneuve-sous-

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Dammartin. She was ordered to take a bath, which brought on peritonitis, which Docteur Fieuzal was unable to cure. Her agony was quick and sinister. An old servant, a wanton woman, ransacked the house, shut the door in the curé's face, and refused admission to any relations. And Marguerite was alone with this woman, who might have been one of Balzac's characters. Alone and with the sweat of death upon her brow and her body racked with pain. Alone, Margot-la-Rigoleuse, the joker of the Ecole militaire, who made so merry at many a supper in the Café Anglais! Alone, yes, amid her splendour, her riches, was the mistress of the château, in which her agony could be heard in the silence of the night. And suddenly she died—Nov. 23, 1886. And the next day, while they placed her in her last bed, that bed of hard planks, where her flesh must expiate the luxury of her life, the printers revived the almost forgotten remembrance of her among the living.

“M.—You are invited to assist at the funeral service and burial of Madame Kulbach, née Julie Leboeuf, deceased Nov. 23, 1886, in her 46th year,

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at her château of Villeneuve-sous-Dammartin (Seine-et-Marne), which will be held at Paris, Saturday, 27th, at 12 o'clock precisely, in the church of Saint Pierre de Chaillot, her parish. De Profundis. From M. Kulbach, her husband; M. Charles Leboeuf, her son; M. et Mme. Jules Leboeuf, her brother and sister-in-law; Mesdemoiselles Marguerite and Geneviève Leboeuf, her nieces; all her family and friends. The burial will take place at the Montparnasse Cemetery."

In the 27th division, 7th line in the western part, under No. 15 North, Marguerite Bellanger found the shelter of a family chapel. Middle class little chapel! One can almost hear the joyous burst of laughter of those gay Imperial times, for here lies one of the coryphees under the faded wreaths, and the candles flare up as they did in those nights of orgy before death had overthrown the table with its tarnished silver.

V

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Mistresses wrongly attributed to Napoleon III.—Liaisons vouchsafed by serious authorities—Mme. de Brimont—Mlle. Hamalkers and her suicide—Mlle. Alexandre—The resignation of Mme. de Malaret—Mme. Créville and the scene of jealousy of Mme. X.—The naïve and audacious lady-of-letters—The Belgian mistress of the Emperor—Mme. Kalergi, or the false heroine of the Coup d'Etat—The scandalous liaison of Mme. de Persigny—*Caucas* concerning her intimacy with Napoleon III.—The gallantries of the duchesse—Ruin of the household in spite of the children—Gramont, duc de Caderousse—Gallant life of this young Seigneur—Death of Persigny—The three marriages of his wife—The Comtesse de la Bédoyère—Indignation of Viel Castel—Mme. de Cadore—The fall of the Empire—The last mistress of Napoleon III.—The dethroned sovereign and the women—Touching and gallant symbol of his funeral.

YES, indeed he liked women, and no one could contradict the statement after having read the pages of

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his many-sided life. This sentence makes a *résumé* of his simple uncomplicated psychology. All through the long days of misfortune, exile, and glory, which the most astonishing destiny dealt out to him, he was a seeker after pleasure.

In Switzerland he found tender melancholy decorated with Germanic tastelessness among the national beauties; in England, the restrained passion of the Sussex Brewer's daughter insinuated itself into his blood; and in Italy those electric, which corroded and burnt his marrow; and he met in France his beloved or Margot's lips—Margot, the comrade and friend of pleasure, whose lips were wet with champagne quaffed at the feasts of cruel Eros. He tasted every pleasure, goaded on and enticed by the desire of the unknown and unforeseen, dreaming of a new Cythera, who was to be found at the end of every beaten track. Not a single hope or joy was hidden from him. He was a Bonaparte, a Napoleon, and an Emperor! And he had the gift to make himself beloved. And he used his gift abundantly. And, in spite of all the biographies which have been written

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of him, the whole of his sentimental life has not been published. To these figures we have called up there are many others to evoke, others less clear and not so great, whose power was less, because of the shorter duration of their lives with him, and it is with these that we must bring this inquiry to a conclusion.

And here again it is necessary to sweep away many traditions and errors. The science of accuracy demands firstly that we must put all those women who gave themselves out as his mistresses on one side; they were the heroines of romance or something worse. History can have nothing to do with these.

The story of the Emperor's *liaison* with Paulette de Lérignan is rubbish. This is allegorical, and it is useless to look for the original; she did not exist. The Emperor's *liaison* with Mme. de Metternich is a fable. The personal enemy of Mme. de Metternich said: "This story is false." The love of Fauchette, permitted to go one day to the Tuileries, where she was discovered by the Empress at the moment when the Emperor was pinching her calves! This is fable too. And the extraordinary and improbable story of that

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woman who has been called by three different names—Lady Stuart, Countess Ellen, or Lady C.—and was the mistress of the Senator Argentin—yes, Argentin!—and called Malaga, who, “according to recent publications, possesses for some few days the favours of the *doux seigneur* of Marguerite B——” And what is that Macchiavellian plot to make the Emperor sleep with a wonderfully beautiful girl who had a terrible complaint? Napoleon III. saw her, but did not desire her. If he did admire her, his admiration was platonic: just like the admiration he had for a young girl at Lady Cowley’s ball, given for the declaration of peace after the Crimean War, to whom he said: “The Empress finds you too beautiful.” This is romance, and I will place other stories in the same category without any scruple—the young English woman and the de Montalan and Emma Livry, whose origin they trace to him with an ease which dispenses us from seeking the author of these scandalous allegations. There is serious authority, however, which permits us to add other names to the authentic list of the mistresses of Napoleon III.

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Mme. Drouyn de Thuys, the wife of the minister, in whom he was interested, and who was removed from partaking of the honours offered at the Tuileries by coming into open conflict with the Empress. And again Mme. de Brimont, a countess it seems, introduced to him by the Prince Napoleon. If Mme. de Brimont had any intimate acquaintance with Napoleon, her *liaison* with him had no special influence on the life of the sovereign. But I said I was going to write of the past mistresses of the Emperor, and Mme. de Brimont was one of these. She held a salon, rue du Corque, which was soon empty, because people were so bored by her. Under M. de Thiers and the late Marshal, she tried again, but in vain. Who is that “*petite dame*” whose name was not mentioned, and for whose benefit the Emperor invested money? And who was Mme. Chanteaud, by whom Napoleon III. had a daughter, who became Comtesse de Molen de la Vernède? Happily, these questions, which have no answer, cannot be asked about all the Emperor’s mistresses. There are those women who loved him for an hour or less—for his purse—or his feelings—

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and the State register will satisfy curiosity. There was Caroline Frédérique Bernardine Hamaekers, the celebrated singer. Her father was an old soldier of Austerlitz, who kept an inn at Louvain. She was born 1836 in that sad little Belgian town of colleges and convents. There were six young sisters clattering about in sabots in the paternal hostelry. Eugène Scribe induced her to leave, and was the means of her entering the opera. This was in 1857. The Duc de Morny noticed her, and she had not real reason for being cruel to him any more than to Auber and others. She was one of the choir of the Chapel of the Tuileries—and was intimate with Napoleon III. She received some emeralds from him, and kept them quite a long time. When she was old, and going over her experiences, and telling only what her lately-acquired modesty permitted, she confessed: “He amused himself with me as with a child, but there was nothing serious.” And really, she arrived and passed on. Success was hers up to 1870. Then she outlived herself, and age came and trouble with it. In 1912 Mlle. Hamaekers threw herself out of the window of her

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house, No. 62, rue Franklin, Brussels. She was taken, Oct. 23, 1912, to the Hôpital Saint-Jean; she renewed her efforts to commit suicide, cutting her throat with a piece of broken glass. She was dead on the morrow. She was placed in her coffin, lined with white satin and covered with chrysanthemums by friends who knew her coquettish disposition. What a touching novel could be written on mistresses grown old and wretched!

Viel-Castel and other writers of reminiscences give us accurate information on the rapid success of these fugitive women, and thanks to them we are able to indicate with certainty the time when they reached the hour of success, which was so soon to be followed by the hour of oblivion. A police report of February 7, 1854, says: "There is much talk about a certain Mlle. Alexandre, who is, for the time being, the Emperor's favourite." Whence comes this lady? A mystery. Mme. de Malaret, lady in waiting on the Empress, is better known. In Feb., 1853, the report is spread throughout the Faubourg Saint-Germain that she is resigning her post so as not to be obliged

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to reject the Emperor's proposals. "I do not know," says Viel-Castel, in echoing the report, "if Mme. de Malaret is sending in her resignation, but I do know that she is not the woman to be afraid of such proposals, and that her virtue was surprised not long ago and conquered by the advances of Colonel Fleury, to whom she not only held out her arms, but her charms also, and let herself be overcome."

We must follow Viel-Castel for information about four other mistresses. The first is a young English-woman, Jan. 11, 1858; Mlle. Sniell, March 9; a young American, "from I don't know where." April 21, it is "pretty Mme. Greville," with whom at Mme. Walewska's ball the Emperor spends an hour. And then, before unmasking, in order to let her know he was the Emperor, he spoke about his portrait which was on the walls, and when she showed her doubt, he said to her, " ' Do you see that little room? Only the Emperor and the Empress may go into it.' " And he went in. This action probably was sufficient to convince Mme. Greville. We see her again at a ball on March 7, 1859, flirting with the Emperor, and this

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brought upon Napoleon III. a scene with Mme. X., who was jealous. On the 24th June, 1861, Viel-Castel speaks of the daughter of the painter Pomeyrae, who had the honour to receive 25,000 francs for having spent the night with the Emperor. La petite Pomeyrae is much sought after. The crumbs which fall from the rich man's table satisfy poor men. To this list we must add also a literary woman, whose name is not given, who offered her works to the Emperor with warm dedications. Would this be that Mme. de xxv., author of *Une Saison à Paris*, about whom Prosper Mérimée wrote to his unknown lady: "She is a person full of candour, who has a great desire to *please* His Majesty, and who at a ball told him so in such plain words that you are the only person in the world who would not have understood them. He was so astonished that at first he could find nothing to say, and it was only after three days that he consented." These attacks are also always without danger to the Emperor. I will give another anecdote from Viel-Castel, dated from the same year, which was entered under October 7, in the following terms:—

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“ The Emperor has had a new mistress at Biarritz—a young and elegant woman and a very excellent horse-woman, who lives with a Belgian husband who lends his hands to this commerce. And in returning from M. Fould’s the Emperor spent the night with this lady, and had so much pleasure that the next day at luncheon, either from fatigue or other causes, was taken ill, and had another attack of the same sort a few hours later. A little fact, gained from Dr. Cabanès, who knew so well how to diagnose diseases of the heart and other complaints of dead kings—— ”

Now I come to some women about whom it is possible to give certain slight details. For example, Mme. Kalerqi, the very beautiful daughter of M. de Nesselrode, head of the Warsaw Police, and niece of the famous Chancellor, “ a very beautiful woman and an excellent musician,” according to Alfred de Musset, and who first married a banker from the Levant, and secondly General Muravieff. It was for her that Theophile Gautier wrote the eighteen verses of “ *la Symphonie en blanc majeur*, which are so warmly lyrical.

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It is supposed that it was Mme. Kalerqi who carried the proclamations and decrees of the Coup d'Etat to the Imprimerie Nationale during the night of Dec. 2, 1851. To which statement the reply was given "that she was too much of a chatterbox to be intrusted with any secret." I shall not discuss the discretion of the lady of that "shameful woman" who had Caurobert for a lover, says a pamphlet, but I will remark that the proclamations of the Coup d'Etat were intrusted to the devoted charge of an aide-de-camp of the Prince, namely, to M. de Beville, who was nominated Dec. 3, 1852, First Prefect of His Majesty's Palace.

Here again is a well-known name, that of Mme. de Persigny. Her name was Eglé Napoléone Albine Ney, and she was born in 1832; her father was Joseph Napoleon Ney, son of the Ney of Moscow, and her mother was Marie Etienne Albine Laffitte, daughter of that Jacques Laffitte famous as President of the Council of Ministers under the Monarchy of July. She was a very beautiful and elegant woman, fair, and had a natural lisp, which gave her a speech something

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almost childlike. She married Persigny May 27, 1852. I shall have nothing important to say about Persigny, having already spoken about him at some length in relating the story of Mme. Gordon and the Strasburg Plot. I will just remark that after the Coup d'Etat of Boulogne, he was condemned to twenty years' imprisonment by the Court. He was liberated in 1848, and the President of the Republic sent him in 1849, as Minister Plenipotentiary, to Berlin, and in 1852 he was made Senator of the Empire and Minister of the Interior. Napoleon III. favoured his marriage, and gave him 1,000,000 francs, it appears, to enable him to settle down. The Emperor also gave the bride 500,000 francs for lace and diamonds. The marriage, in spite of the eccentric temper of the lady and the grave demeanour of her husband, was quite happy in the beginning. Marshale de Castellane, in two notes in his private diary, tells us the degree of passion to which the pair had arrived. He writes, under Dec. 24, 1852:

“ The hunting still goes on at Compiègne. The Minister of the Interior, M. de Persigny, and his wife,

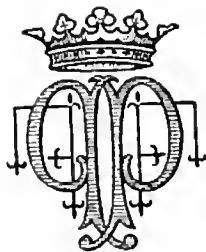
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daughter of the Prince of Moscow, are still much in love with each other. She began to sob on arriving at the meet; M. de Persigny kissed her. It seems that this sort of thing went on from one horse to another all the way back, and then they went up to their rooms and did not come down to dinner; people think this rather a slight for the Emperor.” But for shortcomings in the matter of etiquette Napoleon III. had plenary indulgence. Here follows the second entry, under Jan. 31, 1853:

“ I went to the ball at the Minister of the Interior’s. I did not know Mme. de Persigny, née de la Moskowa; she seems about seventeen; very pleasant and witty. I find her quite charming; I complimented M. de Persigny on his wife; he is very much in love with her, and quite charmed.”

And Lord Malmesbury, some months later, did not contradict the statement, for Nov. 23, 1853, he says that Mme. de Persigny is both “ pretty and gay,” and that her husband was very attentive to his wife.

Later on, in 1855, while de Persigny was at the



Monsieur le Ministre,
Veuillez venir demain
lundi ou me trouver
ici toute la journée.

With cordiality

Persigny

Châtenay

24 Mars,

AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF THE DUC DE PERSIGNY

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Embassy in London, his wife was known as an Anglo-maniac. They called her Lady Persington in fun. Now I will look into her relations with Napoleon III. “Many stories were told about her intimacy with the head of the State,” says Griscelli. But what date do these stories refer to, and is it possible that they go back to 1852? I find in a pamphlet: “Fialin accepted the mistress of his master for his wife.” Then could Mme. de Persigny have been the mistress of Napoleon III. while he was President? This hardly seems probable, and it is only in 1853, and March 6, that I find in a police report the first of these stories spoken of by Griscelli. “They continue to show M. de Persigny as in bad odour with the Emperor. The Minister had to complain, they say, of the excessive gallantry of the Emperor to his young wife.” However, if we are to believe Viel Castel, M. de Persigny had no great right to be too jealous, for from August 12, 1852, he noted that “Persigny is getting over a slight illness, which he contracted, they say, with Mme. la Princesse de B xxx—, who, if not the queen of the gardens, at least the most ‘blooming’ of all

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women.” We must name the year 1863 as the time when the *liaison* of Napoleon III. with the wife of his old accomplice was made public. When, on September 9, 1863, de Persigny was created Duke, they maliciously said that “their conjugal misfortunes had received a sweet consolation.” And some days after, on the 18th of September, the inevitable Viel-Castel returned to the charge, and sneered: “The Emperor is happy in the wives of his ministers; he spends his nights with the most pleasant.” But the scandalous chronicle of the second Empire does not limit the favours of Madame de Persigny to the Sovereign only. The editor of the Duc de Persigny’s memoirs speaks of the “inconséquences of Mme. de Persigny.”

A contemporary says that she was notorious for her debauches, and her erotic nature was not secret. Her home life was a hell, and extravagant to excess, or economical to a ridiculous degree, and she was a public scandal, and her husband never succeeded in hiding his position from people who were amused to see the ambassador, member of the Privy Council, and a

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Duke, deceived in such so openly. Neither the son born of this marriage, Jean Michel Napoléon (died at Paris Nov. 19, 1885), nor the four daughters we see on a faded photograph of the period grouped round their father with such a sad expression, could give decency to the home, the very type of scandal and immodesty. “The most vulgar woman,” said Persigny in 1852, “is to be preferred to the finest of Raphaël’s portraits than the most admired of his virgins.” We should like to know if this was still his opinion ten years later.

The most notorious of Mme. de Persigny’s “inconséquences” was her *liaison* with Ludoric de Gramont, Duc de Caderousse, whose name is the only representative of the period so celebrated in music by Jacques Offenbach. Caderousse, who died Sept. 23, 1865, at the age of thirty, worn out by a life of dissipation, was the son of an eccentric father who spent 50,000 francs in walking sticks, whips and crops, and 20,000 francs on hats, but who was able, in spite of these peculiarities, to leave his son, who survived him, an income of 200,000 francs. And he spent them right

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royally, and killed M. Dillon, October 22, 1862, for having written a little article not at all spiteful, the tone of which had displeased him. He was a great gambler and society man, and at his death there was found in his library a domino, a Breton costume, a pierrot costume, a costume of the time of Louis XIII., and a costume of the period of Henri IV., and people said, rather wittily, that "M. de Grammont-Caderousse read but little." His *liaison* with Mlle. Hortense Schneider, the daring Grand-Duchesse of Gerolstein, was quite famous. As a wit, they said she fell under the Gramont law. As a beauty, she could not be appreciated by those who preferred fair women.

M. de Caderousse took her openly to the theatres, where it pleased him to caress her in his box, and to his estate of Caderousse, where with much ceremony she was sponsor to the bells he presented to the church; to the boulevards, where he gave a lad twenty francs for calling out, "Oh! what a beauty!" when he saw Mlle. Schneider. These slight words give an idea of the person. Viel-Castel writes apropos of

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him and Mme. de Persigny, May 22, 1863: "Mme. de Persigny goes about with Gramont-Caderousse; four days ago she went to fetch him at the *Château des Fleurs*; she went alone to the dancing saloon and made her lover a scene. She goes about with him openly, and the scandal cannot increase." It was this same Caderousse who, lamenting over his domestic troubles, had the impertinence to say before witnesses, "Sir, I cannot allow you to speak evil of my mistress." This little trait gives the finishing touch to the society and the personages of the time. For a long time Persigny, with his chivalrous heart, strove to hide the shame from everyone. There was a moment when he dreamed of a divorce or separation, but the idea was only spoken of as a report. So much grief, so much shame, and accumulated mortification could not exist without making a serious impression on his health. He was threatened with congestion of the brain. He went to the Hôtel de Luxembourg, at Nice, towards the end of 1871, and his state grew rapidly worse. Mme. de Persigny was making a tour in Egypt at the moment. They begged her to return

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several times, but she always had many excuses to remain where she was. At last, when she did arrive, the man to whom the restoration of the Empire was really due, the Conspirator of Strasburg, was no more. His death preceded that of his Emperor by one year. Mme. de Persigny did not long remain a widow. She married a M. Lemoine or Lemoyne, Feb. 18, 1873, who was much younger than herself. She had passed her fortieth year. M. Hyacinthe-Hilaire Le Moyne died at Cairo, Jan. 27, 1879. Ten years later, at the age of fifty-seven, Oct., 1889, Mme. de Persigny married Comte Charles de Villemune-Sombreuil. She died the following year at Cannes, May 30, 1890. And here I must bring to a close the details I have been able to get together about the society woman of the second Empire.

Upon this scene of splendour Mme. Clotilde de la Bedoyère shed her more modest light. She was the wife of one of the Court Chamberlains, whom Viel-Castel does not spare in his severe criticisms. “ He was the most stupid, the dirtiest and fattest of men,” or the most simple-minded of men, absolutely incap-

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able of any work. Such shortcomings, however, were easily excused by the charm and grace of Mme. de la Bédoyère, “ that flower of balls and soirées.” At the beginning of the year 1858 she enjoyed the amorous favour of Napoleon III., but in October already the Emperor tried to get rid of her. In March, 1859, she was decidedly “ a retired Sultana.” I shall ignore, and, indeed, I confess that I actually ignore, the services for which the Emperor appointed M. de la Bédoyère (Georges César Raphaël Huchet) Senator on August 15, 1859. What I know, however, is this, that on this occasion our Viel-Castel did not omit to vituperate. Speaking of the promotion of de la Bédoyère, he says: “ His father was shot in 1815, and his wife slept with Napoleon III.” These lines did not yet satisfy him, and he adds: “ His wife was unfaithful, and having slept with the Emperor, her husband became Knight of the Legion of Honour and Senator.

“ Ah ! Monsieur le Sénateur
Je suis votre humble Serviteur.”

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Mme. de la Bédoyère, née Clotilde Gabrielle Joséphine de la Rockelambert, at Saint Cloud, on July 27, 1829, married on May 31, 1849, the Comte de la Bédoyère. On August 9, 1867, she remained a widow, and in 1869, on January 16, she married General Prince de Moskowa, Napoleon Henri Edgar Ney. She remained a widow for the second time on October 13, 1882. Illness had in the meantime frightfully changed the once beautiful woman, and it was a ruin that was lowered in the tomb on July 22, 1884. By her second marriage she had become allied to Mme. Persigny. Among the other favourites of the Emperor we must also mention the Duchesse de Cadore. In January, 1860, it was noticed that Napoleon III. paid her marked attention, and that M. de Cadore enjoyed all the advantages of a husband of a favourite. It was also a question of sending him abroad as ambassador. I do not attach any importance to all these remarks, but in the books of Baring Brothers, bankers of Napoleon III., the name of Mme. de Cadore figures by the side of Mme. X.

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No conclusion, however, can be drawn from this fact, as the details of the account are unknown.

* * * * *

This book approaches its end, and the hour of misfortunes and catastrophe has arrived for the Emperor. His last favourite before Sedan was a certain Lady C. She had been the mistress of a gallant man, who loved her. She was unfaithful to him and he left her. Thanks to “ secret services which she rendered,” she entered the Tuileries, where the master saw and desired her. As she was there for the purpose of being seen and desired, she did not lose time in negotiations, and quickly accepted the offer which was made to her. The Imperial romance lasted only a short-time. The noise of the cannon of Sedan exploded over France with the smoke of bombardments. For Lady C. began the reign of inconsolate shadow! She had been one of the last favourites of the Emperor, and she still shows in her house a cup out of which Napoleon III. drank his coffee at Châlons, and also the diamond necklace which the Imperial lover had wound round her

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neck one evening at Fontainebleau. After this *liaison* no other romance has existed, for it was not from women, their brief tenderness and fleeting loves, that the vanquished Emperor expected consolation after his failure.

At Wilhelmshoehe Mme. Castiglione paid him a visit. He said nothing, but silently pressed her hand. What could he have said, he who had just lost a throne and an empire. Plunged in his unfathomable dreams and reveries, he reached the soil of exile, the foreign land where the Bonapartes begin and the Napoleons end.

On the 20th of March, 1871, he landed at Dover, and settled in the castle of Camden Place, where years ago he had smiled upon a blonde young lady, such as he had been dreaming of for his peaceful hearth as he wished it then. Even in his misfortunes, however, women still continued to find him attractive; although vanquished, he represented nothing but the Imperial hope and the living Napoleonian theory. A young lady anonymously sent him five-pound notes, which made up a total of 12,500 francs.

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It is Mr. George H. Greenham, one of the police inspectors appointed by the English Government to watch over the exiled Emperor, who tells this story. He also adds another about an eccentric widow of fifty-five. “ She had a fancy that Napoleon III. was in love with her, and every morning she brought him a bouquet of flowers, which she handed to the gatekeeper of Camden House. This woman dressed in a most curious fashion, wore white gloves which were a size too large for her hand, whilst her face and hair seemed to ignore soap and brushes! One day, however, the gatekeeper refused to accept her flowers, and the old girl waited for days to see her pseudo-lover.”

A last symbol of chivalry decorated his tomb. During his journey to England in 1856 Queen Victoria had made him Knight of the Garter, and the Queen herself had handed him the insignia of the order. It was this sentimental banner which was placed over his coffin, whilst his court in exile greeted the Sovereign for the last time. It was a symbol which was not wanted, and which almost hurts French sensitiveness! Ah, to be born, as he once said at Strasburg,

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to be born under the thunder of the cannon of Wagnam, to have had the sun of a hundred victories over the cradle, and then—wrapt in the mantle of the last war and the last defeat—to lie down to sleep under the banner of the times of British chivalry—it is hard indeed!

THE END.

